



## **Welcome to the Holiday Gift Program!**

**We are glad you're here!** Please make yourself a cup of hot chocolate and take some time to read over this document and familiarize yourself with the Adopt a Family/Senior process.

### **History and Impact**

Neighbors Inc. has been providing seasonal gifts to families in need as one of its core services since the organization began over 40 years ago. Over the years, the pressure on families to provide a special Christmas (or Hanukkah), has certainly not diminished, and we continue to spread the joy to low income families and seniors. For those experiencing economic hardship, the holidays are an especially stressful time, not a joyous one. In 2018 our program provided gifts to 783 households, including 1573 children and 97 seniors. Wow! That is thousands of gifts, blessing folks in our community who are most in need of some joy and support. Of those households, about 60% were adopted by generous community sponsors (like you!) and 40% were served gift packages assembled by our warehouse elves using loose donations. We always encourage interested donors to consider adopting, because we find it to be the best possible way to serve our recipients, but we also accept donations of new toys, gift cards, or other gift items to fill our other orders.

To qualify, a recipient must demonstrate financial need, live in our service area (northern Dakota County), and meet age requirements (children and seniors). All qualifying applicants will receive gifts—we do not turn anyone away if they meet the requirements. The reality is that gift programs like ours are expensive and often difficult to operate. Non-profit agencies have to make difficult decisions about which services they should continue to provide based on available resources. Neighbors has committed to provide this valuable service—but we can't do it without you. Your ongoing support of this program is what allows to continue offering it each year. As program manager, I am so grateful that you do. It truly is magical to see just how many people are blessed through your generosity.

**Thank you for your hard work and astounding kindness,**

Scott Andrews

Holiday Gift Program Manager

[Holiday@neighborsmn.org](mailto:Holiday@neighborsmn.org)

651-306-2140

## Adoption in 10 Easy Steps

- 1. Adopters complete an Adoption Request online or over the phone**, telling us how many children or seniors they would like to adopt, some contact info, and any special requests (age of children, etc).
- 2. The program manager matches your Adoption Request** to a recipient based on the size of family you request (and any other factors you list). Recipients will be applying and completing their wish lists during our application period, from the end of October into the first week of December. We work through our list of adoption requests in the order they are received and will try our best to accommodate special requests if needed.
- 3. When we have your match info ready, we'll send you the Wish List that the family completed.** Our general practice is to send this by email, but please make arrangements if you would like to pick it up at our office or receive it by mail. It will contain the first names of parents, children, and seniors. It will list the gift requests for each recipient, and any other info we think will help you provide the best gifts!
- 4. You're ready to shop!** Please know that you do not have to purchase everything on the list. The list is designed to provide you with ideas, it is not a mandate. We ask you to spend about \$100 per child or senior. It's often not possible to get everything on the list using that budget. It's okay. It may be tempting to "bless" a recipient with a lot more than that. If you are moved to be so generous, we would ask that you consider adopting additional children or seniors rather than giving extra gifts to one recipient. This helps more people benefit from the program.
- 5. You may wrap the gifts, but it is not required.** You are encouraged to include some wrapping paper and tape for parents to wrap the presents if you choose to not wrap. In either case, please attach a small tag to each gift so that parents know who the gift is intended for. Please don't write the family number on the labels of the individual gifts as this can alert the older children that these gifts were given to them by someone other than their parents or Santa Claus. Please do not put anything in the "From: \_\_\_\_\_" section of gift tags. Some parents prefer to write in Santa, some write Mom or Dad. And even though the parents are very grateful to you, they don't want their kids to wonder why their gift is from *John Smith* or *Saint Daniel's Church*! We believe it is important for the parents to decide whether or not to reveal that the children have received their gifts through a community program.
- 6. Please pack all gifts into large boxes** rather than in plastic bags. This allows us to handle and store the gifts without risking damage to them. If you have adopted more than one family, please pack the gifts for different families in separate boxes to help us easily identify all the gifts for different families. For example, if you have two families with two children each, please pack all the gifts for one family into one set of boxes, and pack the gifts for the other family in another separate set of boxes.
- 7. Please attach a printed copy of the Box Tag form to the outside of each large box, not the individual gifts.** The Box Tag for each family can be found at the end of the Wish List file. Mark on the box tag which items are found in the box. Mark the big boxes: **Box 1 of 3**, **Box 2 of 3**, **Box 3 of 3**, etc. This number is the total number of large boxes, not the total number of gifts inside. Remember to use a separate set of boxes for each different family you adopt (their family number will also appear on the printed Box Tag you put on the outside).
- 8. We ask that all gifts be returned to us by December 11, 2019** in order to give our families sufficient time to arrange transportation to pick up their gifts ahead of the holiday. If you are unable to meet this deadline, please call the Holiday Program at

651-306-2140. If at all possible, please bring in your gifts as soon as you have them ready. If you are one of the earlier adopters to receive your Wish List, we especially encourage you to do your shopping early so we don't struggle to warehouse everything coming in at the last second. Our storage space is limited, and it is incredibly challenging to contain everything if it all comes on Dec. 11. It is never "too early" to bring in your gifts.

9. **Bring the gifts in to Neighbors!** The Holiday Gift Program is located at the end of the hallway on the lower level of Neighbors. Feel free to come in and get a cart (and maybe a helpful volunteer) to bring out to your car to load up with everything instead of trying to carry everything in. We will offer you a receipt and our heartfelt thanks!
10. Neighbors volunteers will inform the recipient that their gifts have arrived, and they will come pick them up. We also offer recipients **a thank you card**. If they choose to complete this, they will return it to us and we will forward it to you. Not every family completes a card, but it is always exciting when you get to hear how much they enjoyed the gifts you gave.

### FAQ:

**Gift Cards:** In past years, a number of donated cards had not been activated correctly by the merchant upon purchase. When the recipient of the gift card tried to use it, the card read "zero balance." If you purchase a gift card, please take a moment to call the number on the back of the gift card, and check the balance. If you discover an error, please contact the store to activate the card with your original receipt.

**Shopping Online:** Many of us do some or most of our holiday shopping online. Please take special care to look at the date that your packages are expected to arrive, and factor in a few extra days just in case. Sometimes items in the same order arrive at different times. Please check to see that all items are arriving in a timely fashion, remembering that shipping delays are not uncommon during the holidays. Also, if you use Amazon, please consider using "Smile.Amazon.com," which lets you designate a charity (hint: it could be Neighbors Inc.). The designated charity receives a cash match from Amazon, and it does not cost you any more than shopping without designating a charity.

**What about parents?** Many adopters like to include something for the parents, or a gift that the whole family can enjoy together. We do not accept gift requests from parents, because we have so many children and seniors that need gifts that we would prefer donors consider adopting more children before providing large gifts to parents. However, it is okay to provide something for the parents if you would like.

**Help, I want to adopt a lot of people!** Does your organization want to adopt several different families or seniors? Great! This will require some organization on your part, but we will support you in whatever ways we can. There are several successful ways organizations have done this before:

- Collect financial donations from the large group, and then a smaller team of people uses the funds to do the shopping. The smaller team gathers their purchases and sorts the items into the right family boxes, and labels the boxes appropriately. Then they deliver them to Neighbors.

- Allow each member of the organization to view the wish lists, and they can choose to pick and shop for one entire wish list. They bring the purchases back to the central location, already in appropriately labeled boxes. The adoption organizer double checks to make sure that each family has the appropriate amount of gifts, and then delivers them to Neighbors.
- The organizer sets up a “giving tree,” and individuals can select specific items from the tree to purchase. This year, **I am pleased to offer pre-generated giving tree ornaments to adopters who need them.** The ornament contains the recipient’s family number, name and age, and the gift request. Other members of the organization can choose as many ornaments as they want for their shopping list, rather than committing to adopting a whole family by themselves. Once they have purchased the gifts, they attach the tags to them and leave them by the tree. If space permits, you might even have the big boxes near the tree, with the names of the recipients on each one, and have people sort the gifts as they drop them off. The organizer makes sure the gifts are appropriately sorted into bigger boxes for each family, and delivers them to Neighbors.

**New in 2019:** Please note these changes if you have adopted before.

1. Gift Wrapping is now optional
2. Tape the printed Box Tag contained in your Wish List file to the side of your big boxes rather than the “What’s in the Box” signs we used before.
3. **We are no longer asking adopters to purchase clothing.** Sizing challenges, storage for our loose clothing donations, the difficulty of purchasing toys and an entire set of clothes for \$100, and recipient preference are some of the reasons for this change. Neighbors provides clothing vouchers to our Clothes Closet for families who need them, so recipients will not go without clothing if they need it. This year we will also be distributing our stock of loose clothing donations from the past and letting recipients select from the available items.
4. Evening and weekend drop-off hours.
5. Online sign-up for adopters.
6. Option to have gift request ornaments auto-generated for your giving tree.
7. Some other changes in staffing and procedures, which may be visible to you if you have adopted before. We’re working to make the program better and better for all involved. One of the changes is this updated Adopter Guide!

#### **Drop Off Hours and Location:**

**Regular Hours:** Monday-Friday 8:30-12:00 and 1:00-4:00.

**Weekend and Evening Hours:** 10:00 am - 2:00 pm Saturday December 7<sup>th</sup>, and until 6:00 pm 11/12, 11/19, and 12/11.

*We may be able to receive gifts over the lunch hour or outside of the stated times if needed. Please contact [holiday@neighborsmn.org](mailto:holiday@neighborsmn.org) if you need to discuss other options.*

**Drop-off location:** 222 Grand Avenue West, South St. Paul, MN 55075. When using GPS to navigate to our location, make sure to include the ZIP. If you do not, your GPS may route you to Grand Avenue in Saint Paul instead of South Saint Paul.

**How to Reach Us:** [Holiday@neighborsmn.org](mailto:Holiday@neighborsmn.org) or 651-306-2140

## Example of Gifts that are Boxed and Labelled



Gifts with name tags. Gifts can be wrapped or unwrapped.



Boxes with Completed Box Tags