



Dear Friends,

The Cherokee County Department of Family and Children Services would like to thank you again for your participation in our "Secret Santa Program". Last year with your help, in the midst of a pandemic, we were able to serve over 400 children and ensure they would not be forgotten during one of the most difficult years children have had in decades. Through your generosity, not only was our program able to survive through the season, but it thrived, and our kids received some of the best gifts they have ever had on Christmas morning. Without you, it simply would not have happened.

As we gear up for this year, while it is certainly a more stable situation than we had last year, it will once again not be without its challenges.

The sad news is that we have a very large group of children in foster care this year. We typically expect our foster care numbers to grow as we move through the Thanksgiving and pre-Christmas season, but we don't expect to begin with large numbers. Going into the fall, our foster children numbers are nearly 400. We need more sponsors than ever to be able to meet this great need!

If you are new to our program this year, we provide **BRAND NEW** gifts for foster children who have been removed from their homes due to abuse, neglect, or other issues. If you would like to participate this year, here is a summary of how the Secret Santa program operates:

1. The children in foster care submit a "wish list" to our office.
2. We then match the sponsors, who have provided us with an estimated budget on the attached form, with the lists of these children. You will receive information such as the child's first name, age, sizes, and any special wishes or needs the child may have.
3. The sponsors purchase new gifts and deliver the gifts to the designated Secret Santa drop off location. (We are still searching for a location for this year, but we will provide the details to you once you have matched to your child.)
4. Foster Parents and placement resources pick up the gifts at the Secret Santa location, in time for Santa to deliver them on Christmas morning.

If your preference is to purchase Christmas gifts, please complete and return your sponsor form to us as soon as possible to give us time to match the children with the sponsors. We expect to send the children's wish list to their sponsors beginning the second week of November, so it is critical to return your sponsor form soon. Please feel free to tell your friends about the program. You may copy the sponsor form for sharing with those who are interested in becoming a sponsor.

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We do have other ways that you can help us serve our children this year, particularly if you would like a “contactless” way to participate.

1. Cash donations. This type of sponsorship will help our children year-round, not just at Christmas. Some of the ways we use donations year round are to purchase class rings, prom dresses, pay for children to play baseball, soccer, participate in gymnastics, music lessons, participate in Scouts, attend special overnight field trips, and to obtain tutoring.

One hundred percent of all monetary donations are used to directly meet the needs of our children. If a donation is preferred, send your check made payable to “Cherokee Co. D.F.C.S.” (For: Secret Santa) along with the completed sponsor form to the DFCS address above. Please consider becoming a sponsor for this worthy program by completing the enclosed form and indicate your willingness to purchase gifts or make a cash donation.

2. Gift cards. This is a great way for us to serve our kids, especially our teenagers and college age foster children who prefer to shop for their own items or who get more enjoyment having ways to pay for gas, food and recreational items like movies and sporting events. We prefer cards from Walmart, Target, Kohls, and Dick’s as these places more commonly carry most of the things the kids request. Teenagers also regularly ask for food gift cards from places like McDonalds, Chik Fil A, Starbucks, Burger King, Subway and Taco Bell. They also enjoy cards from places like Stars and Strikes, Movie Theaters, Bowling, Gaming places, etc. These cards can be dropped off at our Secret Santa location in a contactless method if that is preferred.
3. Amazon Wish List. Last year, nearly 40% of our children were served through our AMAZON wish list which helped us fulfill Christmas for many of our kids who came into care later in the season. This wish list helps us to fulfill basic necessities that our kids need like socks. Pajamas, hygiene items, baby items and toys for children in the 0 – 5 age group and gifts for teenagers. The link is <https://www.amazon.com/registries/custom/16DY0RCJHOERG/guest-view>

Please discuss this program with anyone who is looking for a Christmas charity to support. We will be happy to answer any questions you may have, so do not hesitate to contact us. We ask your patience if you call and get our voice mail as our program is entirely run by volunteers. Please leave a message and we will return your call as soon as possible. All Secret Santa calls should be directed to **678.235.5519**. For more detailed information, or to print off the Sponsor Form, please go to our website listed below.

Sincerely,

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