

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Q. What is Secret Santa?

A. It is a program that finds sponsors to purchase Christmas gifts for the foster children in the custody of Cherokee County Department of Family and Children's Services (DFCS).

Q. How do I become a sponsor?

A. Simply print out the Sponsor Declaration on this website, fill it out, and submit it to DFCS.

Q. How do I know what to buy for the child?

A. All of the foster children fill out their Wish List. A copy of this list will be mailed or faxed to the sponsor, along with additional instructions.

Q. How do you decide which Wish List I'll receive?

A. We take several factors into consideration: sponsor budget and special requests as to age or sex of child.

Q. If I ask for a particular age or sex of the child I want to sponsor, am I guaranteed that I'll receive it?

A. We make every effort to honor any requests made by the sponsor, but we put the needs of the foster children first. If there is a conflict and we can't honor your request, we'll contact the sponsor and discuss it.

Note regarding specific requests: Requesting an extremely narrow child group (Example: "3 year old girl") will sometimes delay receipt of your wish list because we don't have a wish list for that particular age/sex child. It usually works better if you request a broader range (Example: "1-6 year old girl", or "3-5 year old boy or girl").

Q. Do you have any children who are harder to sponsor than others?

A. Yes. Teenagers are harder to sponsor because they usually require a higher budget. For example, a sponsor with a budget of \$75-100 can easily handle a younger child's requests. However, that same budget will not go as far for a teenager who wears adult-sized clothing.

Q. When can I expect to receive the child's Wish List?

A. We make every effort to get the majority of the wish lists to the sponsors by Thanksgiving. However, this will be an ongoing process as we continue to receive more Wish Lists and Sponsor Declarations.

Q. What sort of items do the children request?

A. You can expect to see a Wish List like any other child of a similar age or sex would submit. They are aware of popular toys, games and clothing lines. However, DFCS deals with every scenario imaginable and the collective Wish Lists reflect this. A sponsor's list may contain items required for a special needs preemie infant, or a college- or job-bound 18-year-old requesting laundry detergent, bath towels, school supplies, etc.

Q. Do I have to purchase everything the child has listed?

A. Purchases are at the discretion of the sponsor and any item is appreciated! We DO ask the children to prioritize their lists - you will see the items are numbered.

Q. I noticed the website states DFCS will not accept used items. Are there any exceptions to this rule?

A. We will not accept used clothing or toys as Christmas gifts. However, we do accept reconditioned game systems if the child has requested one, and the sponsor would like to purchase it.

Q. How many children need sponsors?

A. The number of children in the legal custody of Cherokee County DFCS fluctuates, but it is usually between 150 - 175 children.

Q. What is a "late sponsor"?

A. These are sponsors who are willing to shop for a child's Christmas gifts late in the program. Remember, children come into care at DFCS all the time. We may have children who come into care only a day or two before the program ends and they'll need sponsors, too.

Q. Are my purchases tax-deductible?

A. Yes. We will provide the appropriate documentation for you records.

Q. Should I wrap the gifts I purchase?

A. No. We have to inventory your purchases two times - once when you bring them to us, and again when we give them to the appropriate foster parents or case managers.

Q. Where do I deliver the gifts?

A. We will have a place designated for the drop-off and pick-up of the gifts. You will receive the warehouse location and hours in the packet you receive with your child's wish list.

Q. I've participated in Secret Santa before - why do you change locations each year?

A. Our warehouse space is donated. And, we only require the warehouse for about three weeks. Consequently, the location will always change based on what is available and who wants to donate their warehouse.

Q. Is there any other way I can provide assistance for the Secret Santa program?

A. Yes. We also have a desperate need for monetary donations for the year-round Secret Santa fund, and gift cards to stores such as Wal-Mart or Target.

Q. What is the year-round Secret Santa fund?

A. This is the fund that provides year-round for children's expenses that are not covered by any other agency. Some of the ways we use donations are to purchase class rings, prom dresses, pay for children to play baseball, soccer, participate in gymnastics or dance classes, take music lessons, participate in Scouts, attend field trips and obtain tutoring.

Q. What are the gift cards used for?

A. We have many, many uses for the gift cards. The first priority for the year round donations and the gift cards is to purchase Christmas gifts for any children who may not have been sponsored. After that, gift cards are used to purchase clothing, shoes, book bags, winter coats and other necessities for the children throughout the year. Often, children come into care with little or nothing; the gift cards help to cover the cost of necessary purchases for them.

Q. What are the overhead costs of the program - or - how much of my donation actually goes to benefit the foster children?

A. There are no administrative costs, such as salaries or overhead, so every penny donated goes directly to benefit the foster children.

The Secret Santa program is 100% operated by volunteers. (Additionally, volunteers must have a criminal background check performed by Cherokee County Sheriff's Office before they can work with the Secret Santa program.)

Various donors in the community provide all of our necessities (warehouse space, phone service, supplies, website maintenance, etc.).

Q. Why does the Secret Santa phone number change every year?

A. DFCS loans us a cell phone so we have a number to publish. DFCS collects the phone in January after the program is over and distributes a new phone to us in the fall.

If you have any other questions, please contact Ann Feczko at  
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**THANK YOU FOR CONSIDERING SECRET SANTA!**