



STATE OF MICHIGAN

GRETCHEN WHITMER
GOVERNOR

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
ST. JOSEPH COUNTY

ELIZABETH HERTEL
DIRECTOR

07/12/21

Dear Community Partner:

I am writing to tell you a little more about the Holiday Project. DHHS serves as a one door for those looking to help others during Thanksgiving or Christmas time. This is an effort to reduce duplication and increase the number of individuals that receive a little holiday cheer. We do this by using our database to do a mass mailing to families and seniors who are low income in both Cass and St. Joseph Counties. We then reach out to the community to identify those that want to help. We look to schools, churches, service groups, businesses and individuals who want assist others during the holidays. We simply make the match and provide the information the client has given us to the donor.

Donors have a lot of freedom to tell us who they would like to help. You can tell us a family size, a specific community, a certain age or so many more. It is your call. Just like a mentoring program, we read each form and try to make the best match.

If your organization is assisting some families at holiday time, independent of getting names from DHHS, we encourage you to share those names with us so we can remove them from our list. Nothing is more disappointing then receiving a call from an excited holiday donor only to have them tell you how upset they were to discover that the family they were helping had more gifts than their own all because 3 organizations had all helped the family. By DHHS working as the central hub we reduce this.

DHHS also coordinates with the Salvation Armies in both Cass and St. Joseph County, the Three Rivers Lions Club, and the Toys for Tots program in Cass County. We do the mailing and collect names and provide them to those organizations. Again, working in collaboration to reduce duplication.

Each year close to 3000 Holiday Project Applications are mailed to families in Cass and St. Joseph County and senior citizens. This year the criteria we use to pull was families receiving food assistance or some type of cash assistance including those in foster care who had children between the ages of 2-12 years. We also mailed to seniors between the ages of 62 to 105 years getting help with food or on disability. Last year there were over 600 households of seniors in each county that fell in that range. Most of these people live on very limited income and only ask for basic needs.

Please consider working with DHHS to be a Holiday Donor this year. Together we can make someone's day a little brighter and their holidays a little merrier.

Sincerely:

Jan Becraft-Reed
Community Resource Coordinator
Cass/St. Joseph County MDHHS