

Christmas Store

One of the ways we have experienced the most success reaching families in the Post and 42nd neighborhoods is through our Christmas Store. Families who are invited to participate shop at the store and select a toy, a game, a hat, gloves, and miscellaneous small presents for each of their children. We wrap the gifts (or provide the materials for the parents to do so) and the parents take the presents home and present them to their kids as gifts *from the parents*, not from the church or an agency.

The Christmas Store touches lives in lots of positive, powerful ways. First, it creates an opportunity for children to receive Christmas presents who otherwise might go without. Second, it allows us to create new relationships with families in the neighborhoods where we serve. Most importantly, it allows families to support their children themselves, rather than relying on charity from others. Families pay \$5 per child to shop, with a maximum of \$15 per family. The parents shop and choose gifts they know their children will like, rather than accepting gifts randomly donated by strangers. Parents have the joy of presenting their children with gifts they selected and purchased themselves, rather than handing them gifts given by others. As a result, both children and their parents are blessed – children by experiencing the joy of gifts on Christmas morning, parents by being treated with dignity and experiencing the joy of giving themselves.

In the past, we have relied on one of our ministry partners to supply most of the gifts for the Christmas Store. But the project has been so successful, this year we have decided to provide all the gifts ourselves. In order to stock the store, we need the following items for children of all ages, from infants through late teenagers:

Toys	Games
Dolls	Sporting goods
Books	Art projects/supplies
Hats	Gloves
Underwear	Socks

Stocking stuffers, including things like nail polish, hot wheels cars, and other small items that children of all ages would enjoy

Some shopping and donating hints: Our goal is to help parents struggling with the impact of generational poverty experience Christmas in much the same way as we do here at Outlook. If there is a toy or other gift you would enjoy giving to your child or grandchild, there is a good chance a parent or grandparent shopping at the Christmas Store would enjoy giving that present as well. For that reason, we accept only NEW items. Culturally, many of the families we serve are African-American or Hispanic, so black and brown dolls are especially popular, although dolls of any color are welcome. Like many families, it is often difficult to know what to purchase teen-agers, so gifts for teens (especially teen boys) are especially needed. Board games are an excellent item because they can be experienced by kids and their parents at the same time. Because many families will be participating, multiple numbers of the same gift or toy are great.

Donations for the Christmas Store are being accepted now through December 16. Volunteers are also needed to help set up the store on December 20, to work at the store in various positions on December 21, and to make plates of Christmas treats for each family who participates. Sign up to volunteer here: <https://www.signupgenius.com/go/20F0C4AAEAE2AA4F58-santas1>.

If you have questions about the Christmas Store or would like more information, please contact Mike, mwilkins@outlookchurch.org.