

## **Dear Potential Adopt-A-Family Sponsor:**

First, thank you for considering participating in St. Vincent de Paul's Christmas Adopt a Family Program. Although this is a significant commitment, we believe you will find it very rewarding.

This letter provides a detailed explanation of the program. Please read it carefully, even if you have sponsored in the past, as a few things have changed.

**WHAT FAMILIES ARE CHOSEN:** Families are chosen for sponsorship by the Conference of St. Vincent de Paul. Most are families in need who have already received assistance from SVdP during the year. We check with other agencies to ensure they have not applied for duplicate help. Families are chosen regardless of religion, race, or national origin. Please remember the following instructions:

**YOUR COMMITMENT:** We request that each sponsor purchase and wrap at least two new presents (one toy and one clothing item) for each child under 16 and one present for each older sibling. We focus on them since Christmas is a special time for young children. Additionally, one present should be provided to each parent and grandparent living in the same household.

The sponsor also purchases all the uncooked food items needed for a complete Christmas dinner, whether traditional or Hispanic.

Please take note of the following information:

**COSTS:** The cost of adopting a family will depend on the size of the family you choose to adopt. Here are some general guidelines:

The cost of Christmas Meal Items is \$10-\$15 per person, depending on the size of the family.

Christmas Presents: \$35-\$50 per person on average.

**WHAT INFORMATION WILL BE PROVIDED:** Once you have been matched with a family, you will receive the name, age, sex, and clothing size of each family member, as well as suggested preferences for gifts (clothes or toys). *Any stated preference does not bind you.* The sizes on the form were collected during home visits as early as September. Since everyone grows, especially children, we recommend buying slightly larger than the size listed (a child can always grow into a large item, but never into something too small). *Talking with or visiting the family may allow you to check sizes more precisely.*

**WHAT DO YOU DO WHEN YOU HAVE A FAMILY?** First, review the form you will receive with the family information and gift requests. If you **decide NOT** to "adopt" the family, you should immediately call the Adopt-a-Family Conference liaison who sent you the family information. The Conference liaison will assign the family to another sponsor. Sometimes,

two sponsors are asked to adopt a family jointly, usually because the family is very large and beyond the resources of one sponsor. If this applies to your assigned family, you should contact the other sponsor and coordinate your plans.

Please remember the following text:

You should contact your family to see what may and may not be appropriate for their circumstances. It is a good idea to block your home phone number by dialing \*67 before you dial the family. Most families are dealing with problems of unemployment, under-employment, illness, or some other unlucky condition. Some may not appear "poor" but may be burdened with the costs of health problems or other devastating situations. Many are single-parent homes. Regardless of the reasons for the family's need, we know you will extend respect, kindness, and the love of Christ just as you would want others to treat your own family.

**YOU SHOULD CONTACT THE FAMILY AS SOON AS POSSIBLE AFTER YOU RECEIVE THEIR INFORMATION:** This will relieve their anxiety about being adopted for Christmas and give you a chance to meet them in their own home should you choose to do so. It would help if you didn't wait until a few days before Christmas. Low-income families start to panic as Christmas approaches. If they haven't heard from a sponsor, they often spend the rent money on presents.

**TOY RECOMMENDATIONS:** it's best to avoid expensive items such as new bikes, computers, PlayStations, and faddish items like \$150 athletic shoes. Children often request brand-name items, but it's important to remember that generic brands are available and usually cost much less. Even if you have the means to give expensive gifts, it's worth considering that they can create issues between children, their peers, and relatives after you leave. If you spend significantly more than \$35, we suggest considering one \$35 toy and several educational items like books, puzzles, and games.

Many children request bicycles, and some sponsors are able to provide them. However, the cost can far exceed the \$35-\$50 guideline unless you can access good, safe, used bikes.

**OTHER GIFTS:** Family gifts—crock pots, electric fry pans, towels, or bed linens—may be appropriate for parents or grandparents. But remember that this is still Christmas, and even an 80-year-old grandmother may want a sweater instead of the blender she asks for on behalf of the family.

**INTERPRETERS:** If you encounter a family where the adults speak little or no English, we recommend finding a friend, neighbor, or colleague who speaks their language to serve as a translator during your visit. Relying on children to translate may lead to misunderstandings, especially when discussing the family's needs and wishes for Christmas. While the St. Vincent de Paul Conference may have members who can help,

they often have many requests to handle. Please try to find a translator before reaching out to us.

Please remember the following information:

**WHEN TO DELIVER:** Presents should be wrapped and delivered by December 23rd. It's nice to have presents under the tree for two days before Christmas. Food can be delivered at the same time, but you should discuss available refrigerator space with the family. Discussing this topic when you first call or visit them is best. Over the years, we have encountered families who were unable to cook a large turkey, so we purchased a gift card for a pre-cooked meal.

**Other Items:** In the past, some sponsors have also provided a Christmas tree and decorations. This is up to your discretion. We always recommend artificial trees because of fire hazards and old electrical wiring in the homes of many low-income families. If decorations are provided, we recommend ornaments, tinsel, garlands, and other non-electrical items. If you want to purchase a tree, check how much room the family has in their living space. If the family has very little space, you might instead consider a small Nativity scene or a poinsettia, which can be placed on a table.

The absence of a "thank you" does not always mean that there is no gratitude. It can be challenging for a family, especially a father, to express their real feelings when they are poor and rely on others for their needs. It may be too embarrassing and emotional for them.

In God's eyes, acts of kindness towards the less fortunate do not require a "thank you" from the recipient.

Saint Vincent de Paul  
2024 Christmas Adopt a Family Program

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