

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

First, thank you for considering adopting a family in St. Vincent de Paul's Christmas Adopt a Family Program. This is a significant commitment on your part, although we believe you will find it a very rewarding one.

This letter explains the Program in detail. Please read it over carefully, even if you are a past sponsor since a few things have changed.

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

**YOUR COMMITMENT:** We ask that each sponsor buy and wrap at least **two new presents (one a toy and one a clothing item) for each young child** under 16, and **one present for each older sibling**. *Christmas is a special time for young children, so we are focusing on them.* **One present** should also be provided to each parent and grandparent living in the same household.

The sponsor also buys all the uncooked food items required for a complete Christmas dinner, either traditional or Hispanic (see last page).

**COSTS:** The cost to adopt a family will, of course, depend on the size of the family you adopt. General guidelines are:

COST OF CHRISTMAS MEAL ITEMS: \$10-\$15 a person depending on the size of family  
CHRISTMAS PRESENTS: \$35-\$50 a person average

**WHAT INFORMATION WILL BE PROVIDED:** Once you have been matched with a family, you will receive the name, age, sex and clothing size for each member of the family, as well as suggested preferences for gifts (clothes or toys). *You are not bound by any stated preference.* The sizes on the form were collected during home visits as early as September. Since everyone grows, especially children, we recommend that you buy 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 give you a chance 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 jointly adopt a family, usually because the family is very large and beyond the resources of one sponsor. If this applies to the family you are assigned, you should contact the other sponsor and coordinate your plans.

You should make contact with your family to see for yourself what is and what 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 luckless condition. Some may not appear "poor" but may be burdened with the costs of health problems or another devastating situation. 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. You shouldn't wait until a few days before Christmas. Poor families start to panic as Christmas approaches. If they haven't heard from a sponsor, they will often go out and spend the rent money on presents.

**TOY RECOMMENDATIONS:** Please try to avoid expensive (new bike, computer, PlayStation, etc.) and faddish items (\$150 athletic shoes). It is common to get a request for a brand-name item. Remember that generic brands are also available, and usually for far less. Even if you have the means to give expensive presents, remember that these often create a problem between children, their neighborhood peers, and relatives after you leave. If you decide to spend significantly more than \$35, we suggest you consider one \$35 toy and then several educational items (books, puzzles, games, etc).

Many children request a bicycle, and some sponsors can provide them. However, they can far exceed the \$35-\$50 guideline unless you have access to 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 keep in mind that this is still Christmas and even an 80-year-old grandmother may really, really want a sweater instead of the blender she asks for on behalf of the family.

**INTERPRETERS:** You may receive a family where the adult(s) speak little or no English. If you do not speak the family's language, we recommend that you seek out a friend or neighbor or workmate who speaks the language sufficiently to help as a translator when you visit the family. Although we find children in these families pick up English quickly, to depend on them to translate may spoil Christmas for them when you will be asking questions about what the kids need and want. The St. Vincent de Paul Conference sometimes has members who may be able to help, but these people quickly get swamped with requests. We hope that you will make a real effort to find a translator before calling on us.

**WHEN TO DELIVER:** Presents should be wrapped and delivered by no later than December 23. It's nice to have presents under the tree for a couple days before Christmas. Food can be delivered at the same time, although you should talk with the family about available refrigerator space. Discuss this with your family when you first call or visit them. Over the years, we have even had families without the ability to cook a large turkey, so a gift card for pre-cooked meal was purchased.

**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 electric wiring in the homes of many poor families. If decorations are provided, we recommend ornaments, tinsel, garlands, and other non-electrical items. If you are willing to purchase a tree, check first 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.

**Finally**, lack of a "thank you" does not necessarily signify lack of gratitude. It's difficult to be poor and must depend on others for your family's needs. Sometimes it's too embarrassing (especially for a father). Having to express his real feelings would bring tears to a man's eyes, an awkward situation for all.

In the eyes of God, no act of kindness requires a "thank you" from a poor recipient.

Saint Vincent de Paul  
2021 Christmas Adopt a Family Program