



## *Grandmothers' Secret Santa Program*

### **Overview**

This is a giving program for grandmothers who are now raising their grandchildren due to various circumstances. There are many Christmas giving programs to help families in need, making sure under-privileged children experience the joy of Christmas.

### **History**

The program was started in 2011, by Dorothea Patterson Davis who felt the need to help a single grandmother who attended her church. This grandmother had to assume custody of five of her grandchildren days before Christmas because her daughter had gone to jail. When she went to her daughter's house to get clothes for the children and to bring their Christmas gifts to her home, she found none. Her heart was broken. Mrs. Davis informed a group of families who were willing and able to help, giving each family one child to be a blessing to. These "Secret Santas" took the gifts to the grandmother just days before Christmas. This was truly a blessing for not only for her and the children, but also to those who gave just a little more that Christmas season. This woman is not the only person that goes through this situation. There are a lot of grandmothers out there raising their grandchildren, when in fact they have already raised their own children.

### **Program**

The program is simple: We don't focus on toys but instead on the essentials kids need and then toys as a secondary fulfillment. For example we ask that each child be provided with socks, underwear, panties, bras, pants, shirts, coats, shoes first then toys and anything else that will lighten the load on these grandmothers. This year we hope to include hats and scarves in there as well.

1. We get referrals from different places - some from churches, some from connections within CPS, and some from others who have heard about the program
2. We ask the grandmother to fill out a registration form that lists the specifics about each child - age, size and the desires that the kids have (the needs are always the clothes)
3. We assign a child to a family and some have asked for two children to support. Assignments are made by late October/early November. Donors are solicited throughout the year by letting them know about the program, getting the contact information and checking back with them in the fall as the season approaches.
4. Families are asked to deliver their donations by the 1st weekend in December. They are asked to wrap the purchases, label and bag the gifts for their child. We have a team that can wrap the gifts and tag them with the intended child's name if needed.
5. The items are then packaged together in trash bags and numbered so that kids can't see what is inside because we invite them to come with the grandmother on distribution day.
6. We setup a distribution day / activity day with light refreshments, for a chance for the kids to prepare thank you cards to the Secret Santas and do other arts & crafts while the adults are picking up the gifts.
7. Finally on exiting we give the child a stocking stuffed with a few fun things they can see immediately.

We welcome as many people who would like to join us in being a blessing to this some times overlooked population. Please let us know if you want to participate. We are getting started now with soliciting families to be donors and adjusting the program to make it more efficient so ideas and suggestions are being accepted as well.