

The Season of Giving

How to help struggling families this Christmas

Nearly half of low-income Americans reported that they or someone in their household experienced some type of income loss during the pandemic, according to information published by Pew Research Center. Because more people are facing hardship this year due to the impacts of COVID-19, more families in your community will likely be in need of assistance this holiday season and into 2021.

Organizations like The Salvation Army estimate they could serve up to 155% more people with Christmas assistance this year, assuming the resources are available, based on increased services already provided during the pandemic. In order to aid those most vulnerable, nonprofit organizations across the nation need your help.

Consider donating gifts in bulk at Christmastime, or explore other ways to make an impact and serve as a beacon of hope for those in need:

Donate Food - Gathering around

a table filled with homemade food is a treasured tradition for many families, but for others it's a luxury beyond reach. Donating food to your local food pantry or other community organizations can help give the gift of Christmas, ensuring more families are able to come together to enjoy a meal as part of their holiday celebrations.

Volunteer Your Time - Not all gifts require spending money. You can give back by volunteering your time to make the holiday season brighter for families and individuals who need assistance. Organizations in your area often need volunteers for projects like sorting food and necessities for care packages, serving food in soup kitchens or making holiday cards to send to nursing homes.

Another example of how to get involved is through The Salvation Army's iconic Red Kettle Campaign. Protocols are in place to ensure the safety of bell ringers, donors and partners, so enthusiastic bell ringers

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Most needed holiday items

Every Christmas there are families who don't exchange gifts because they can't afford them. However, many communities offer programs that rely on donations to put new clothes and toys under the tree for children and families that usually go without Christmas gifts.

One example is The Salvation Army's Angel Tree Program, which connects a sponsor with a deserving child (or "Angel"). The trees can be found during the holiday season at retail stores, businesses and other locations throughout many communities. Anonymous donors select a name off of a tree, purchase the items listed on the tag and bring them back to the drop-off location to be donated.

Whether you're able to adopt a child or simply provide a few items,

be on the lookout for these commonly requested items as you tackle your holiday shopping this year:

- Baby necessities like bottles, blankets, diapers and wipes
- Warm weather attire, winter coats, gloves, hats, scarves
- Books or board games
- Dolls, action figures or other imaginative play toys
- School and art supplies
- Personal care items: soap, shampoo, deodorant or hair products
- Cleaning supplies
- Laundry detergent and fabric softener
- Gift cards to retail stores
- Pre-paid gas cards
- Restaurant or grocery gift certificates

Know your holiday baking ingredients

The right ingredients are necessary for baked goods. It's also essential those ingredients are fresh, as age can compromise the taste of some spices, and leavening ingredients like yeast, baking soda and baking powder may lose efficacy over time.

• **Flours:** All-purpose flour is versatile and useful in many recipes. In addition, bread flour, cake flour and pastry flour have attributes that make them better suited for their respective jobs than all-purpose flour. Individuals who follow certain diets, including gluten-free, can find alternative flours that can be substituted.

• **Baking soda:** This leavening agent is activated when it is combined with acid and heat. That is why it is often paired with citrus juice, buttermilk and sour cream.

• **Baking powder:** This leavening agent is baking soda mixed with a powdered acid and cornstarch. If baking soda is the only leavening agent, it will not require the addition of another acidic ingredient. "Double-acting" means carbon dioxide

bubbles will form during mixing and again during heating.

• **Yeast:** Yeast takes more time to metabolize and cause doughs to rise than other leavening agents.

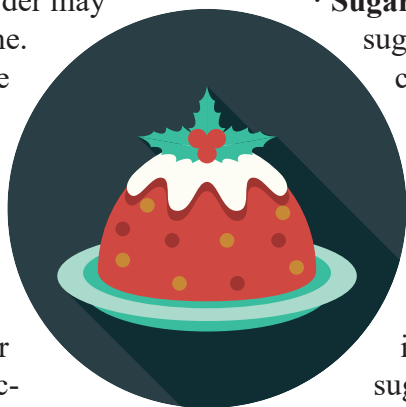
• **Sugar:** Granulated sugar is the most common sugar found in recipes. Confectioner's sugar (powdered sugar) is used in frosting and icings. Brown sugar is refined sugar with molasses added, and is used in certain recipes, like gingerbread.

• **Salt:** Granulated table salt is used in everyday baking.

• **Unsalted butter:** Unsalted butter will be the default for baked goods unless the recipe specifically mentions salted butter.

• **Eggs:** Eggs help to bind ingredients together. Large eggs are most often cited in many baking recipes.

• **Milk:** Dairy adds moisture and texture to batters. Alternative milks, such as soy or almond milk, can sometimes be substituted, but the resulting texture may change.



• **Vegetable oil:** Many recipes call for vegetable oil, which has a neutral flavor.

• **Shortening:** Shortening is a solid vegetable fat used to make tender baked goods. Shortening also has a higher melting point, which helps cookies and other items retain their shape while cooking.

• **Flavorings:** It is helpful to

have various spices and extracts on hand. Cinnamon, ginger, nutmeg, cloves, and allspice are some common baking spices. Almond and vanilla extracts are quite versatile and add extra punch to recipes.

• **Additions:** Mix-ins, such as chocolate chips, cocoa powder, oats, nuts, and dried fruits, often turn up in holiday recipes.

Simple and delicious Potato pancakes for the holidays

Potato pancakes are traditionally served during Chanukah celebrations. This dish is often referred to as "latkes," a Yiddish word that loosely translates to "little oily thing."

Potato pancakes are not exclusive to Jewish celebrations and cuisine. Germans have their own variation called "kartoffelpuffer" that can be served with sour cream, applesauce or smoked salmon. The Irish have "boxty," which may be made with a combination of shredded potato and mashed potato before being fried.

Latkes (Potato Pancakes) Serves 12

3 large potatoes, peeled and shredded
1 small onion, shredded
3 large eggs
1 teaspoon salt
2 tablespoons all-purpose flour, or as needed
1/2 cup vegetable oil

1. Place the potatoes and onion into a bowl, and stir in eggs, salt and flour as needed to make the mixture hold together. With wet hands, scoop up about 1/3 cup of the mixture per patty, and form into flat round or oval shapes.

2. Heat the vegetable oil in a large skillet over medium heat until it shimmers, and gently place the patties into the hot oil. Fry until the bottoms are golden brown and crisp, 5 to 8 minutes, then flip with a spatula and fry the other side until golden.

3. Line a colander or strainer with 2 paper towels, and drain the cooked latkes in the colander. Serve hot.



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How to help struggling families this Christmas

Continued from front page

can join the effort and help raise money this holiday season.

Adopt a Child for the Holidays
Some local organizations work

directly with low-income families in the community to identify their children's specific needs. They gather information on each child in the family, including their special interests, clothing sizes and wishes for

holiday gifts. When you adopt a child or family, whether on your own or in partnership with others, you commit to purchasing items on the child's wish list to ensure they have everything he or she needs to celebrate the season, from food and gifts to clothing essentials.

Give a Recurring Gift - A staple of the holiday season, The Salvation Army's red kettles raised \$126 million last year. That amount could be reduced by up to 50% due to the closing of retail stores, less retail foot traffic and an increasing unemployment rate, which would significantly limit the organization's ability to provide needed services to the most vulnerable. Enlisting in Love's Army with a sustaining monthly gift of \$25 can help meet the growing need for assistance at Christmastime and into 2021. Your gift is invested locally, so you can be sure you're helping rescue Christmas for those in need in your own community.



gift in a loved one's name. Many organizations will provide a card acknowledging your one-time or ongoing gift, which you can wrap and give as a gift with a note explaining the thoughtful gesture.

To get involved or find more ways to help, visit rescuechristmas.org.

Giving safely during an unusual holiday season

The potential for charity scams could be even greater in 2020. Charities accept donations year-round, but the spirit of giving that prevails during the holiday season makes the weeks between Thanksgiving and Christmas especially popular times to donate to charity. In addition to being on the lookout for the usual scams, the Office of the Attorney General for the District of Columbia warns prospective donors to beware of potential scams involving the COVID-19 virus.

Recognizing the challenges communities have faced as a result of the economic fallout of the pandemic, donors may be more inclined to donate to help laid off workers, small businesses or others. Prospective donors must recognize that some COVID-related charities may make them vulnerable to criminals looking to exploit their charitable nature. In recognition of that, the OAGDC offers these tips to men and women who are considering donating to charity in 2020.

- Be wary of recently launched operations. Operations that were formed in response to the pandemic may be viable, but the OAGDC also warns that many have been formed by scammers looking to exploit the outbreak for their own gain. Be especially wary of crowdfunding campaigns.

- Ask questions. The OAGDC says that any charity, even those formed in response to the COVID-19 outbreak, should be able to provide you with the same information as charities that have been around for years. Prior to donating, ask for the charity's name, address, telephone number, and mission. In addition, don't feel skittish about asking how your donation will



be used and the percentage of each donation that goes to programs that directly help the people you're trying to assist.

- Be vigilant before donating via peer-to-peer social networking websites. It's especially difficult to verify how donations made via texts or websites are ultimately used. While these can be convenient ways to donate, the OAGDC urges donors to be especially vigilant about vetting before donating to charities through these channels.

- Never donate using cash, gift cards or wire transfers. Reputable charities do not ask for donations to be made in this way. The OAGDC advises donors to use credit cards whenever possible.

- The terms "COVID-19" or "coronavirus" do not authenticate a charity. Prior to donating, donors can confirm a charity is legitimate by contacting organizations such as Charity Navigator, the BBB Wise Giving Alliance or the National Center for Charitable Statistics.

Employ these strategies to ensure a charitable donation ends up in the right hands.

Lastly, give by making a charitable

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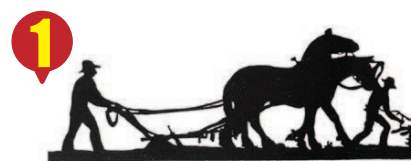
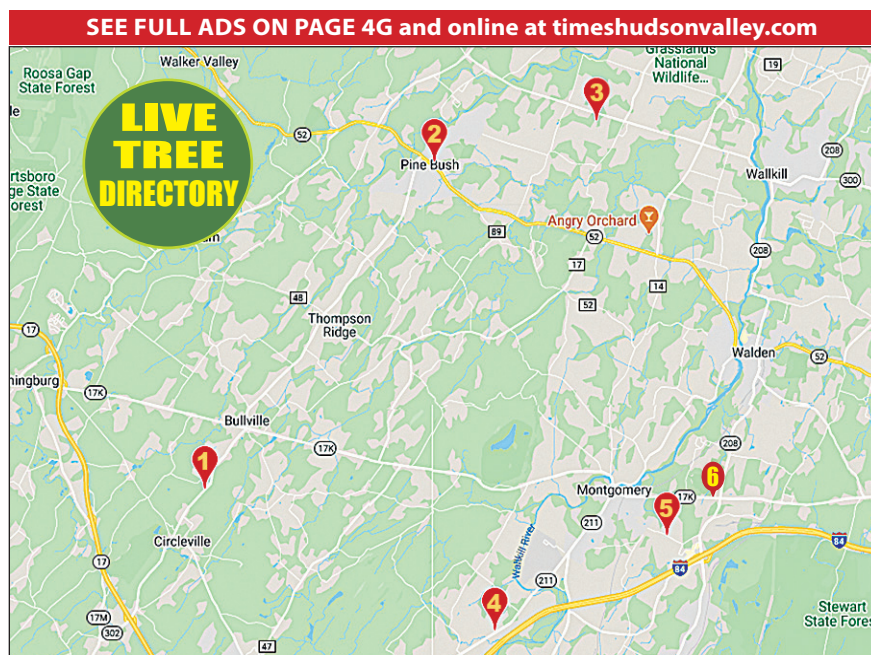
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Giving outside the box this year

- Organize a thank you gift to essential workers and order it from a local business
- Teachers love gift cards to local businesses
- Share a positive local shout out on social media
- Patronize a local business's on-line ordering, pickup or delivery
 - Organize a gift opening event on zoom
 - Give a beauty gift card from a local salon
 - Reschedule instead of canceling
 - Gift a yearly print plus digital subscription to your local newspaper

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