



November, 2019

# Christmas Notes

## Christmas Clearing Council Celebrates 70 Years

In 1949, a small group of compassionate employees at a Waukesha radio station started the Empty Stocking Club to collect money, clothes and toys for needy families and disperse them through what was then the Waukesha city welfare office. No numbers are available to tell us how many families received gifts that first year, and though the project helped some, there were many other families that needed assistance.

Just three years later, in 1952, the Waukesha County welfare director asked several social service agencies to work together on a more organized, coordinated Christmas project. What eventually became Christmas Clearing Council (CCC) was born – and 81 families were helped that year.

In those early days, volunteer coordinators in individual communities would identify needy local families, solicit businesses for gifts and deliver them themselves. These dedicated volunteers worked with great passion, but had no office, no staff, no technology. Many of them worked from card tables in their own homes, collecting information about those who needed help and enlisting their neighbors to get involved.

By 1965, the giving program had evolved: individual donors were matched with recipients, an early version of today's sponsorship program.

By the end of CCC's third decade, it had filed paperwork to become chartered as a nonprofit organization. Its first bylaws were approved by the CCC Board of Directors on April 26, 1978.

The first Toy Shop, organized for families that are not sponsored, was held in 1980 at Looy's Carpet and Home Decorating Center in Waukesha. It moved five times, each time to larger quarters, and has been held at St. William Catholic Church since 2003.

During the 1980s, CCC evolved from an all-volunteer organization to one with part-time paid staff. Technology allowed accurate record keeping. Its current sponsorship program started and, in the late 1980s, the first toy collection sites were established at fire stations countywide. Today, CCC has nearly 100 toy collection sites countywide.

Throughout its history, CCC has been a strong proponent of collaboration with the community, businesses, social service agencies, schools, churches, youth groups and service clubs.



Certainly, times changed; processes changed; CCC leaders changed. Increasingly coordinated efforts allowed us to help 4,191 children in 1,718 families in 2018.

But one thing has remained the same for 70 years. Every Christmas, a superbly generous community opens its collective heart and helps us share the magic of Christmas.

## COUNTRY Christmas Country Christmas Walk

Join us at The Ingleside Hotel Dec. 3, 4 and 5 for an event to benefit CCC. This year, on these three days only, The Ingleside will host the Illuminated Walk through Country Christmas. Enjoy the mile-long Country Christmas trail on foot.

Hours are 5-9 p.m. The last tickets will be sold at 8 p.m. Admission is \$7 per person or \$5 per person with the donation of a new book. All books will be donated to CCC for its annual Toy Shop.

## Gift Cards for Teens

While we are blessed with many toys from a generous community, few of them are appropriate for teens. Children ages 12-18 in our client families receive gift cards. If you would like to share the magic of Christmas with a teen, you can do so by donating \$10, \$15 or \$25 gift cards for Kohl's, Target or Walmart. You don't have to do it alone! Enlist your colleagues, neighbors, scout troop or church group to help.





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## Congratulations to our 2018 Angel Award Recipients

CCC established the annual Angel Awards in 2006 to recognize those in the community who, through special acts of generosity, further the CCC mission of helping families celebrate a more joyful Christmas. Each year, the CCC Board of Directors selects an outstanding individual, youth group, community organization and business to receive the award. These are our 2018 Angel Award recipients.

### Mary Rantala – Individual Award

Mary has generously sponsored more than 100 children since 2011. In addition, she organizes an annual daylong Christmas shopping bus trip to Chicago for family, friends and neighbors. Before the trip, Mary gathers items for an onboard auction, which is held during the trip. The proceeds from that auction are donated in the form of gift cards to CCC. Those gift cards help make Christmas merrier for our teen clients.



### Waukesha West High School Ignition – Youth Award

The students in the Waukesha West High School Ignition are an inspiring and energetic group. These students in grades 10-12 work together to welcome freshmen into West, creating a smooth transition from middle school to high school, and providing personal connections, activities and tutoring throughout the year. The Ignition students have collectively sponsored 114 children in the past three years. Their resourcefulness in raising money to buy gifts and following through with getting wish lists, shopping, wrapping and delivering gifts is an inspiration.



### Ascension Lutheran Church Knit Wits – Community Group Award

The Knit Wits at Ascension Lutheran Church in Waukesha have spent a great deal of time over several years knitting handmade hats and mittens and donating them to CCC. Families with children who do not receive assistance through our sponsorship program are invited to our one-day Toy Shop each December. At Toy Shop, parents are allowed to choose toys and a book for each child. It has long been a priority of the CCC Board to make sure each child also receives a warm winter hat and warm mittens or gloves. The Knit Wits generous donations help make that possible.



### Silly Willyz – Business Award

The now-closed Silly Willyz in Pewaukee was a toy collection site from 2015-2018 and staff there encouraged patrons to become CCC donors. In addition, the proceeds from an annual 20 percent off sale day were donated to CCC to help bring Christmas-morning smiles to the faces of many Waukesha County children whose families are struggling financially. In 2015, Silly Willyz hosted the filming of a short Christmas season feature story by Milwaukee's Fox affiliate, an event that helped share our story with the wider community.

