



Christmas Clearing Council
of Waukesha County

2021 ANNUAL REPORT

A RECORD CHRISTMAS!

It was a year with some impressive numbers. In 2021, Christmas Clearing Council coordinated giving to 4,888 children across Waukesha County – a record. Individuals, families, churches, businesses, schools and community groups sponsored 3,101 of those children – also a record.

Our person-to-person sponsorship program is at the heart of CCC's mission – because it allows parents to request specific items their children want or need, and it promotes personal contacts between sponsors and client families.

In 2021, our new website (see page 3 for more details) included an online form that made it much easier for sponsors to connect with client families.

"I do think the online sponsorship form accounted for the increased numbers (of sponsors)," said Natalie Kranzman, CCC's customer service coordinator. "We also were able to match sponsors with families more quickly this year."

She added that 2021 produced "quite a few first-time sponsors who told me they had never heard of us before and were excited to get involved to help someone in their community." Of the 843 sponsors in 2021, 324 were new sponsors – another record.



The staffs of the Waukesha County Community Foundation, and the Women and Girls Fund partnered to sponsor four kids for Christmas 2021.

JINGLE BELL JOG

Join us Sunday, July 24, 2022, for Christmas Clearing Council's Jingle Bell Jog, featuring a kids' dash, and 5K and 10K run/walks.

The race will be on the Lake Country Trail starting and ending at The Ingleside Hotel. After the race, stay for a family-friendly event with food and beverages at The Ingleside.

Check out christmasclearingcouncil.org after April 1 for details and how to sign up. Proceeds will support CCC's efforts to help children in low-income families at Christmas.

TOY SHOP WAS BACK

In 2020, we missed the fun, the excitement and the camaraderie of our annual Toy Shop. In 2021, with a little extra planning, we successfully brought it back.

The three-day event – two days of setup and one day of shopping – takes a huge amount of work. We are so grateful to the more than 600 volunteers who helped:

- Set up the Toy Shop.
- Unload, sort and organize the toys and other gifts.
- Guide parents through the shopping experience.
- Dismantle the Toy Shop and clean up.

Our Toy Shop is stocked with toys, games, books, stuffed animals, blankets and sleeping bags, and hats, mittens and gloves. Every item is donated by generous area residents who drop them off at their place of business or at one of nearly 120 collection sites around the county, all of them managed by another fleet of volunteers.

Our special thanks to St. William Catholic Church in Waukesha for the use of its facilities.



This Christmas season was exceptionally difficult. The Waukesha parade tragedy left all of us with heavy hearts at a time when cheer should be abundant. But people stepped up – with compassion, generosity, prayers and donations. We are grateful to our supporters who offered gifts and assistance to any CCC client families and others affected by this tragedy. Together, we did all we could to ensure that children in struggling families were offered the light of hope on Christmas morning. You are a shining example of a community that cares for its neighbors. We are blessed to work alongside you.

Sarah Hein
Executive Director



After a pandemic-related one-year hiatus, we reopened Toy Shop in 2021 and welcomed volunteers, clients and supporters for our 73rd season of giving. Toy Shop day was filled with a familiar excitement: a gym filled with toys, games and books – and parents eager to fulfill the wishes of their children on Christmas morning. One of the best parts of this event is seeing the grass-roots efforts that make it happen. Individuals, groups, businesses and families collect money, toys and gift cards. They sponsor kids and volunteer at Toy Shop. Without you, we would not have been able to serve nearly 4,900 children. Thank you for sharing the magic of Christmas.

Lindsay Fischer
President, CCC Board of Directors

**SAVE
THE
DATE**

Whether you were a sponsor, a donor or a volunteer, we hope you'll be back for Christmas 2022. Here are some key dates to note:

- July 24** Jingle Bell Jog at The Ingleside Hotel
- Sept. 1*** Applications for Christmas assistance and the sponsor signup form available to be completed at www.christmasclearingcouncil.org.
- Oct. 10** CCC office opens; sponsorship matching begins
- Nov. 15*** Deadline to apply for Christmas assistance is at 11:59 p.m.
- Dec. 4** Deadline to sponsor a family is at 11:59 p.m.
- Dec. 14** Deadline for gifts to be delivered to sponsored families
- Dec. 17** Toy Shop
- Dec. 20** CCC office closes at noon for the season

*** Please share these dates with anyone you think might benefit from our serves.**

DISCOVER OUR NEW WEBSITE



The months and weeks just before Christmas are busy times for our staff, board and volunteers. But the so-called “off season” – the late winter, spring and summer months – are filled with planning sessions, all designed to enable us to serve more families more efficiently.

In 2021, we spent many of those sessions with two talented, enthusiastic young designers who created a new, more appealing, more user-friendly website. We didn't change the name, but we changed just about everything else.

Some major new features involve:

SPONSORSHIP:

Potential sponsors no longer have to call our office during specific hours and speak with a staff member or volunteer. They simply fill out the online sponsorship form any time it's convenient. Staff and volunteers are available to help, but most 2021 sponsors found the form so easy to fill out, they didn't need help.

DONATIONS:

Our Donate page gives easy-to-follow instructions on how to donate cash by mail or electronically, and how and where to donate gift cards and toys. You can also order Target gift cards directly from Target and Target will ship them to us.

VOLUNTEERS:

Adults and teens can sign up for any of several Toy Shop shifts or to help at the annual Country Christmas Walk at The Ingleside Hotel.

CLIENTS:

Families that need help can fill out an application in English or Spanish.



2021 HIGHLIGHTS



- 🎄 CCC coordinated giving for **4,888** children.
- 🎄 A record **3,101** children were sponsored.
- 🎄 **843** individuals, groups and businesses signed up to sponsor. **324** of these were first-time sponsors.
- 🎄 **617** children were shopped for at Toy Shop.
- 🎄 **599** teens received gift cards.
- 🎄 **121** toy collection sites throughout the county were managed by **46** volunteers.
- 🎄 **14** Waukesha State Bank sites collected gift cards and donations.
- 🎄 Nearly **800** volunteers helped in the office, at The Ingleside Hotel Country Christmas and at Toy Shop.
- 🎄 **14** client children had birthdays on Christmas.
- 🎄 Donations came from Wisconsin and **13** other states.

DONATIONS

- 🎄 Cash and gift card donors: 545 individuals, businesses and community groups.
- 🎄 Total cash donations: \$140,841.
- 🎄 Total gift card donations: \$24,417.

KUDOS TO OUR PARTNERS

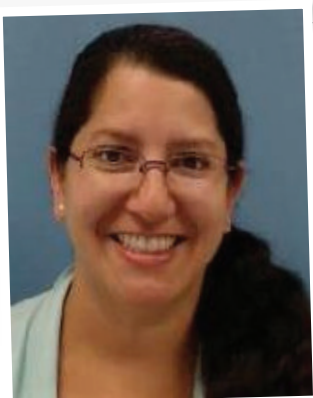
WITH GRATITUDE, we recognize some of our many community partners who support our mission of sharing the magic of Christmas. To all who work on our behalf, thank you.

All Waukesha County public and private K-12 schools
Centers for Excellence, Waukesha
La Casa de Esperanza
Salvation Army, Waukesha
Food pantries across the county
Catholic Charities
Safe Babies, Healthy Families Easter Seals

Waukesha County Health and Human Services
Community Smiles Dental
The Ingleside Hotel
Delzer Lithograph
Fox Bros. Piggly Wiggly
Ellenbecker Investment Group

ANGELS AMONG US

Sharing the magic of Christmas takes a lot of hands and a lot of hearts. We salute some of those who make Christmas brighter for thousands of Waukesha County children. They volunteer. They donate cash and gift cards. They sponsor kids. They help organize our Toy Shop. They are businesses that support us and agencies that connect us to our client families. They are angels.



AGENCY WAUKESHA SCHOOL DISTRICT

As the liaison for bilingual families, Maria Pieters helps them access community services. "That includes providing support to the Christmas Clearing Council in its mission to reach all families in need for the holidays," Maria said.

That support includes helping parents fill out the application, explaining how CCC's program works, and helping parents decide what might be a good gift idea for a child in a certain age group.

"After 13 years of working with families, my coworker Leticia Campos and I get to know some of our families almost as extended members of our own," Maria said. "We know who is going to need a reminder to register, who might be too shy to ask and who has a change of address. We simply help families overcome obstacles that might impede their ability to receive services provided by CCC."

Her work is personally satisfying. "I love what I do and if I go the extra mile, it's because someone once went the extra mile for me and my family. That's something you never forget."



DONOR ONNIE SMITH

Onnie first learned about CCC nearly 25 years ago when her daughter was little. "We sponsored a family because I wanted her to understand that not every family was as fortunate as we were."

Several years ago, Onnie established an endowed fund within the Waukesha County Community Foundation. "I mentioned my love of bicycling and reading and that I wanted to incorporate that in my giving," she said.

Now, with a connection facilitated by WCCF, Onnie is sharing her passions with hundreds of children through a generous grant to CCC. "I became passionate about biking very young. I enjoyed the freedom to visit friends and be independent. I hope the bikes (I donate) give the recipients that same feeling of independence and joy of the outdoors – and make it easier for young people to get to school or get a job."

For the last two years, supply chain challenges prevented CCC from buying bikes, so Onnie's grant was used to buy books and gift cards from Dick's Sporting Goods. "As soon as CCC can get bikes, I hope to gift bikes again," she said.



SPONSOR THE LAUER FAMILY

When Claire Lauer first learned about CCC, she became a cash donor. "After our daughter was born, we wanted to sponsor a family, which we have done for two years. My family is blessed with so much and we wanted to pay it forward."

Husband Bryan helps in another way. "I saw a CCC social media post asking for Spanish-speaking volunteers," Claire said. "My husband speaks Spanish, so I volunteered him for this." He helps the CCC office staff communicate with Spanish-speaking families and makes the arrangements with the families the Lauers sponsor.

Claire said sponsoring has been fun and gratifying. "It's truly an honor to give back in this way," she said. "We loved shopping for the kids and getting something for the parents. We've had such lovely families. Both were so sweet and thankful for everything."

Christmas has new meaning for the Lauer family. "Our daughter was born in August 2020 and she changed our perspective on Christmas in the best way," Claire said. "We didn't get her any gifts for her first Christmas and instead used the funds we saved on our CCC family."

For those reticent about sponsoring, Claire has this advice. "You're doing an amazing thing by helping a child. Remember it might be hard for the parents, but they are so thankful and the kids are so happy. If you have questions, just call CCC. They are happy to help."



VOLUNTEER PAT KNUTH

Pat has been volunteering for CCC and donating gifts for Toy Shop for nearly 20 years. She started out helping sort gifts on Toy Shop drop-off night. Next up was helping bag gifts that parents had chosen. Then, she recalls, "someone said, 'You know this building. Would you direct traffic?' – and I have ever since."

Pat is a longtime member of St. William Catholic Church in Waukesha, which hosts Toy Shop. Some clients arrive with a bit of anxiety – some because they don't know how the process works and others because they are a bit self-conscious about asking for help.

She greets each one with a smile and gently directs them to the appropriate place. She puts everyone at ease because she treats every client with respect and dignity.

Pat relishes the job. There is great satisfaction in "knowing the joy it brings to recipients and volunteers both. There are no grumpy people on Toy Shop day," she said.

And then there are the sweet memories. "There is a foster mother who's likely in her 70s who greets me every year with enthusiasm. It is a delight to see her and know that she does work most of us do not have the patience to do." Another time, she greeted "the parent of a child I worked with to prepare him for sacraments. She just smiled and smiled and my heart glowed."



BUSINESS THE INGLESIDE HOTEL

The Ingleside Hotel has partnered with CCC for three years to help struggling families have a happier Christmas.

"When we learned about Christmas Clearing Council, we knew we wanted to be involved," said Tiffany Woodward, the hotel's director of marketing. In 2019, the Ingleside team decided to host three nights during which the traditional mile-long Country Christmas light display would be open only to walkers.

"We contacted CCC with our idea and numerous volunteers stepped up to help us make the event possible."

The Ingleside donated a portion of each ticket cost to CCC. "This past season, we were very excited that we raised \$10,984 for Christmas Clearing Council," she said.

The partnership fits well with The Ingleside's corporate philosophy. "Country Christmas was started as a way to give back to the community and what better way to give back then to raise funds for families in our own county," Tiffany said. "One of the things that makes our light display unique is that it is all done in-house by our employees. Our team loves Christmas and CCC goes to the heart of what Christmas is all about."

There is also personal satisfaction. "Christmas has always been about spreading joy to others," Tiffany said. "I enjoyed working with all the CCC volunteers over the past few years. Our entire team appreciates the opportunity to make Christmas a little bit happier for families in Waukesha County."



DO YOU KNOW AN ANGEL?

Each year, the CCC board gives an Angel Award to a business, a community organization, a youth (individual or group), an individual and a Rookie of the Year. These awards recognize those in our community who, through special acts of generosity, further the CCC mission of helping families celebrate a more joyful Christmas.



If you know a person, group, business or organization you think should be considered for an Angel Award, send pertinent information to info@christmasclearingcouncil.org.

WAYS TO HELP ALL YEAR

DONATE CASH

See how to help on our website.

DONATE GIFT CARDS

\$10, \$15 or \$25 from Walmart, Target or Amazon.

SPONSOR

Starting in September you can choose how many children to help.

SIGN UP FOR AMAZON SMILE

Choose Christmas Clearing Council.

SHARE

our contact information with someone who could benefit from our services.



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LET'S CONNECT!

christmasclearingcouncil.org
facebook.com/christmasclearingcouncil
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