

Annual Message from Marc McTeague 2011

Here we go again..... The Salvation Army Angel program.

Each Christmas, Michele and I, along with a lot of great friends and helpers, donate our time, money and efforts to The Salvation Army Angel Program. For those of you new to my newsletters, normally they're a combination of whatever is on my mind, industry insights, and whatever odd things I find funny. This one is different. But now is as good a place to start as any. We've been doing this for 16 years and as the need has grown, so have the number of "elves" that join us.

I got the Angel sheets Wednesday morning. When I see a giant notebook filled with pages for 639 kids, I get a knot in my stomach. It's hard to believe that there can be that many kids right around here that need us. So you all can experience my nausea I'm going to put up a video on You Tube of me looking through the notebook the first time. We're also putting together a website this year that will better explain the program and hopefully answer the FAQ's. For those of you new to this, or get this forwarded to you, I'll try to convey why this program means so much to us and why we get caught up in this insanity every year.

Here it goes. Growing up, we were fortunate to always have good Christmases. I'd fight going to sleep on Christmas Eve, wake up excited and run downstairs with my brothers. I knew darn well Santa was coming, I just didn't know what I'd find. There was always plenty under the tree. Clothes, toys, and always a surprise or two. I remember one year getting an Atari computer. To even things out, I also got a bottle of Windex. I was a weird kid who liked to clean windows. Don't judge. The feeling was that all was right in the world.

Now imagine the direct opposite of that. Christmas morning a time of little or nothing. Thinking that maybe life forgot about you and "What's so special about Christmas anyway?" The Angels we adopt would have nothing if not for this program.

There are many charities that help out the unfortunate at Christmas, but this is the only one I know of that is so direct and impactful. When you adopt an Angel, it's much different than just putting money in a bellringer's bucket. A message from a long time "elf" said it better than I ever could:

"I was just going to email you about this!!! yes, the hux family would like "adopt" a kid this year. Boy preferably b/t ages of 7 and 9 (thats what I know and its easy to shop for). Did I tell you what brandon said last year. it was seriously the sweetest thing ever. You can add it to your growing list of comments re: this program.

In our house we call it "adopting" a boy for christmas. We want to give a boy the same christmas our kids get and are fortunate that we are able to do so. Well, last year our boy was named Trevor. So when we would go shopping for Trevor or I would bring things home, we all would go over all the stuff and talk about it, but as I said, we always said, "This is for Trevor, our little boy we are adopting for christmas this year." well, apparently Brandon (then 6) took it literally and he said to me, "Mom. When Trevor comes to our house on Christmas, I will share my room with him." He thought we were really adopting another brother and my very stingy boy was willing and excited to share his room. It was one of the sweetest things he's ever said. While we have to quit saying that we are adopting a little boy from now on, it was a touching moment nonetheless! :)"

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Trevor is still in the program. Brandon Hux will be adopting his "brother from another mother" again this year. How cool is that? Sadly, I see the same names over and over again. There's Alzhea, age 6. I remember first seeing that name when he was an infant in the program. There's Ace, Kitanna, Caleb, and Kameron. There's that huge family again with all the Biblical names. AGAIN? (I wrote the above part last year and dammit if these kids aren't all in it again this year) Part of me gets mad that nothing's changed. I question the parent, guardian, or whoever is responsible for these kids. I judge when I know damn well I shouldn't. Then I just think of the kids. They didn't ask to be put in this position. And I'm sure they'd rather not be. I think of them on Christmas morning, knowing that somebody out there-who doesn't even know them-cares about them. Somebody thinks they matter.

Here's a fringe benefit of the program. You'll feel great when you do it. You'll find it probably does more for the giver than the givee. I get story after story about how much fun a family had out shopping for their Angel. I see great people, some only once a year, some new, and many repeat offenders come together to somehow pull this off. I'm not a "hugger" but I get plenty from people who got emotional from what they got out of volunteering for the program. Not sure if that's a fringe benefit.

I've been getting plenty of emails from people asking "where is your email this year? When can I get my Angels?" That makes me feel good.

I attached a prior year's message below that goes a long way in telling the story and answering your questions. It might be some of my best writing ever because it comes from the heart. You'll see how the numbers have grown. It would be great for my mental health if the SA would just hand me 300 kids one year. 639 is an imposing and altogether sad number. Please forward this message to anybody you think might be interested. We'll need all the help we can get.

Peace and Respect,

Marc McTeague