

*My name is Amanda Schiffer. I was incarcerated in Ohio's Department of Rehabilitation and Correction for 4 years. Three of those years I was housed at NERC (Northeast Reintegration Center) in Cleveland. I wanted to share today about my personal experience with the Christmas Miracle program. I was graciously able to attend two years in a row: 2023 and 2024. When you're incarcerated you lose your entire sense of identity, including being a mother. We were able to get visits with our children throughout the year, but they were in a very controlled setting. With the Christmas Miracle, we were able to be a mother to our child or our children for a day. The program allowed for us to personally hand pick gifts for each child. We were able to personally wrap our gift ourselves. For this day, we got to hug and hold our children. I got to hug my mother. We were served a great meal. Out of my entire incarceration, the Christmas Miracle stands out as the best two days. Our institution had so many women who qualified to participate that the event was broken up into two sessions for two days. In those two days I would watch countless women come back to the dorm in tears. Happy tears, because they got to be a mom. They got to give their children gifts that would be cherished forever. My daughter Maesyn, who loves to sing, received a microphone both years she came. She loved her gifts so much, she still plays with them to this day. She remembers that it was a gift from mommy and loves it that much more. On top of the time I had with my daughter, I was able to spend quality time with my parents, who cared for her while I was gone. Not only do we miss our children, but we also miss our parents terribly too. The Christmas Miracle provided us with professional family photos, a dinner, gifts, a gingerbread house to construct together, cookies, hot cocoa, and so much more. I am so grateful for this program, as are countless women, men, and their children across the state. I thank God, that at this time in my life, I have the opportunity and pleasure to participate in the program from the other side.*