

THE HISTORY OF THE

CHRISTMAS BUREAU

1945

The Christmas Fund started in 1945 in an effort to help a single World War III soldier, Col. William Schwenk, who lost his eyesight, one arm below the elbow and the use of his other hand in a mine explosion in Germany. A Red Cross worker from Spokane asked the Newspaper to help and the community rallied to do so.



1946

In 1946, donors flooded the post office with letters and raised \$6,000 so an 8 year old girl could undergo heart surgery to correct her birth defect. Her name was Carol Lee Davis, and she lived a full life until 2005.



1980

The Christmas Bureau as it is currently organized began in 1980, when the focus shifted away from clothing to giving out food vouchers and toys. This is also when Catholic Charities and Volunteers of America got involved with the Spokesman Review to put on the Christmas Bureau.



1985

Longtime Christmas Bureau Leader Marilee Roloff, Director of Volunteers of America from 1986 - 2016, has volunteered every year at the Christmas Bureau since 1984. She is the Christmas Bureau's most dedicated volunteer. Picking out the right book is an art, and one that Marilee does well.

1990

Scholastic Inc. donates books, enabling organizers to give them away without denting the Christmas Bureau budget. In 2008, due to the recession, Scholastic could no longer sponsor the books, but continue to offer discounts on books. In 2009, Fred Meyer/Kroger offered to sponsor the books at a \$25,000 level.



1996

In 1996 Dave McGann, the owner of four Arby's locations here in Spokane started donating sandwiches to the Christmas Bureau volunteers.



2000

In the year 2000, the Christmas Fund raised a total \$543,385, in support of the Christmas Bureau to help members of the community.



2005

Clint and Cheryl Branz of Jim Custer Enterprises stepped in to create a more festive look for the Christmas Bureau, adding in the iconic red and white drapes in 2005 and every year since, putting everyone in the Holiday Spirit.

2010

In 2007, the Spokane Chiefs Hockey team started their annual tradition after the first goal scored, to have fans throw teddy bears onto the ice, to support the Christmas Bureau.



2015

In 2013, Students at St. Mary's Catholic School first held a Pajama Drive to benefit the Christmas Bureau. Collecting 258 sets, one for every student.

In 2015, Providence started donating Pajamas and has continued this tradition every year.

2020

Due to the rise of Covid-19 in 2020, the traditional Christmas Bureau would not be taking place. Instead, only giving out toy vouchers. The Christmas Fund had a record breaking number of donations, with a total of \$734,383. Helping 30,863 people, including 16,166 children.

In 2021, evening hours are introduced to the Christmas Bureau, helping working parents put gifts under the tree.

Penelope the White Elephant also joins the Christmas Bureau!

THE CHRISTMAS BUREAU HAS CHANGED A LOT OVER THE LAST 79 YEARS, BUT THE ONE THING THAT HAS REMAINED THE SAME IS THE DESIRE TO HELP THOSE IN NEED.

A SPECIAL THANKS TO OUR AMAZING VOLUNTEERS WHO SHOW UP EVERY YEAR! WITHOUT YOU NONE OF THIS WOULD HAVE BEEN POSSIBLE!

