

Christmas is such a special time of year. It gifts us with lifelong memories. We are thankful for the precious gift of Christmas blessings received and shared in our own special way. Respect and kindness often spill over during the holiday season, and we do our best to share our blessings with those who are finding life less bright and happy on Christmas day.

Have you ever thought of being a *Christmas Angel*? Maybe you have already earned the title. The role can be very simple and requires only a small number of your 1440 daily minutes during this busy time of year. Below are steps to give you an idea of how this can work. There are no qualifications, just a willing heart. The purpose: to bring a moment of surprise and relief to children who need the warmth of socks, mittens, and a cap during the winter weather. Take a look at how this can happen. Let me just say, Angels can act individually or as a group.

Step 1: Google/Al and ask for the poorest zip code in your city. If you live in a small city, you might only have one. If so, skip this step. (For readers in Memphis, TN, the poorest Zip is 38126. Remember, I lived there until a year ago.)

Step 2: Google/Al and ask if there is a Homeless Center in your city. If not, ask Google/Al if the Salvation Army in your city has a Christmas program where items for children are accepted.

Note: Al will give suggestions of where a Christmas program may be offered. The Salvation Army is mentioned in most cities. (In Memphis, TN, I am familiar with two places to consider contacting...Homeless Center, 383 Poplar Ave. and the Emmanuel Center, 604 St. Paul Ave. both will likely welcome items for the children they serve. The Emmanuel Center is sponsored by a church and located in Zip 38126).

Step 3: Depending on information gathered in Step 2, you might want to Google/Al for the names of churches in the poorest ZIP as often churches are familiar with the needs of their parishioners.

Step 4: When a donation location is in place, it is time to spread the word. Post a bulletin or send an email to your fellow employees, apartment/condo neighbors, club members, and others inviting them to become Christmas Angels along with you. (There is a suggested message included to save you time.)

Step 5: Place a container (box or bag) in a convenient spot to collect donated items. (A suggested sign to put on the collection container is included.)

Step 6: Go shopping. Suggestion...start at the Dollar Tree. Their items work well. Select any size for children from K-12. If you only get one item—there will be one child who will smile on Christmas day. Be as generous as your heart will allow. Reminder...these items sell out quickly. Oh, and while in the store, a peppermint stick or a chocolate bar would be a real treat to go with your gift.

Step 7: Write a note for the gift. (a suggestion is included). Just a simple note.

Step 8: Deliver your gifts following the instructions provided. Most will want the gifts unwrapped. Check out when, where, how, and to whom the delivery should be made.

Step 9: Enjoy the joy you will feel in your heart as you make the delivery. No doubt you will wonder about the person who picks your gift and you will wish for him/her warmth and a moment of happiness—and pure joy with a lick of the peppermint stick or a bite of creamy chocolate. You are indeed a messenger of joy: a true Christmas Angel.

Step 10: The last step! Post a bulletin for those who donated to thank them and to tell them of the joy they provided to children who now can have warm toes, fingers, and ears in the cold winter weather!!! What a blessing. Included is a suggested message.

Thank you for reading Judy's and my Christmas thought and a special Merry Christmas to you! Should you decide to accept our thought we would enjoy hearing about your experience. Sample posters and messages are on the following.

Program Announcement Poster*Christmas Angel Program*

Hello,

Christmas is just around the corner. It has come to my attention that nationwide there are some 150,000 homeless children. Some of those children are here in our own community. Many without socks, mittens, or cap to warm their toes, fingers, or ears as they wait outside for a school bus or walk to school. We can help. Arrangements have been made for our donations to be delivered to

_____ on _____ for distribution during the Christmas season. Any size mittens, cap, or socks will work for children from K-12. A single item will be appreciated; yet be as generous as your heart will allow. Please drop your donation in this container, unwrapped. Oh, and, while in the store, a peppermint stick or chocolate bar would be an extra special Christmas treat. Your heart will be as warm as the children's toes, fingers, or ears as you drop your items in the container.

THANK YOU for being a *Christmas Angel*!

Your name

Sign for the container*Christmas Angel Program*

Hello, please place your donation in this container.

Delivery will be made to _____ on _____.

Thank you for being a *Christmas Angel*.

A Blessed and Merry Christmas to you!

Note for the gift

Hello, during this Christmas season I hope you will enjoy a little treat to keep you warm on these cold winter days. You are special. Give yourself a great big hug.

Signed the *Christmas Angel*.

Thank You note to donors.

Hello, (donation: our socks, mittens, and caps, etc.) were delivered to _____ on _____ and will be distributed to the children for Christmas. The people at the center were most appreciative of your kindness and wanted me to be sure to tell you how much your gift will mean to the children.

Bless you and Merry Christmas to you and your family.

Your name



The download for the *M&M Christmas Story* follows. A great read for little ones—Enjoy.

M & M Christmas Story

As you hold these candies in your hand and turn them, you will see...

The **M** becomes a **W**, an **E**, and then a **3**. They tell the Christmas Story. One I am sure you know. It took place in a stable a long, long time ago.

E The E is for the EAST where the star shone oh so bright.

M The M is for the *manger* where the baby Jesus slept that night.

3 The 3 is for the *Wise men* bearing gifts of Gold, Frankincense, and Myrrh.

W The W is for *Worship*. Praise to His name.

So, as you eat these M & M candies or share them with a friend, remember the Spirit of Christ and never let it end.

1. How can Santa deliver presents during a thunderstorm?
2. What kind of Christmas music do elves like?
3. What do snowmen call their offspring?
4. What did the peanut butter say to the grape on Christmas?
5. Why do Dasher and Dancer love coffee?



If you woke up as a 100 foot Christmas tree, what would you see?

If you gave all the gifts listed in the Twelve Days of Christmas, it would equal 364 gifts.

What was the silliest thing you saw today?

The Montgomery Ward department store created Rudolph the Reindeer as a marketing gimmick to encourage children to buy their Christmas coloring books.



GLASS

DECORATE THE TREES



The Statue of Liberty was gifted to the US by the French on Christmas day in 1886. It weighs 225 tons and thus you could consider it as the biggest Christmas gift in the world.



NAPKIN

FORK

WHAT WAS THE BEST PART OF YOUR DAY?



PLATE

How many snowflakes do you see?

Santa's address:
123 Elf Road,
North Pole, 88888



KNIFE



SPOON



1: His sleigh is flown by reindeer
2: "Wrap" music
3: "Chill-dren
4: "Tis the season to be jelly!"
5: Because they're Santa's star bucks!

The oldest artificial Christmas trees date back to the late 1800s and were made of green raffia (think grass hula skirts) or dyed goose feathers. Next the Addis Brush Company used their machinery that wove toilet brushes to create pine-like branches for artificial Christmas trees that were less flammable and could hold heavier decorations.

In 1962 – the US issued the first Christmas postage stamp.



A useful way to recycle your Christmas tree? Some zoos take donated Christmas trees and use them as food for the animals.

Coca-Cola was the first company that used Santa Claus during the winter season promotion.



A dreidel is a spinning top, with four sides, each marked with a different Hebrew letter (nun, gimel, hay and shin). The custom of playing dreidel on Hanukkah is based on a legend that, during the time of the Maccabees, when Jewish children were forbidden from studying Torah, they would defy the decree and study anyway. When a Greek official would come close they would put away their books and take out spinning tops, claiming they were just playing games.

The First Blessing

למ וניהולא, יי התא חורב.
ויתווצמב ונשדיק רשא, מלוצה
הכונח לש רנ קילדהל ונוויצו

5. Why do you put candles on top of the menorah?

SAY THE BLESSINGS AS YOU COLOR THE FLAMES

If you woke up as small as a Dreidel, what would you see?

What was the silliest thing you saw today?

Explain how to play Dreidel

GLASS



COLOR THE CANDLES AND FLAMES



The menorah was originally kindled outside the home, but it was brought inside in ancient times to guard against offending neighbours.

1. Which hand is best to light the menorah with?
2. What's the best Hanukkah gift for the person who has everything?
3. What do you call a speck that falls into the latke pan?
4. What's the best thing to put into the sufganiyot?

NAPKIN



FORK

Count the Hanukkah gelt

PLATE

KNIFE

SPOON

Tell a story you remember about Hanukkah



The traditional foods during Hanukkah all have to do with oil: potato latkes, (grated potatoes and onions that are fried in oil) and sufganiyot (jelly donuts).

6. Why did the dreidel go to the doctor?
7. What did the older Hanukkah candle say to the younger one?

The eight-day Jewish celebration known as Hanukkah or Chanukah commemorates the rededication during the second century B.C. of the Second Temple in Jerusalem, where according to legend Jews had risen up against their Greek-Syrian oppressors in the Maccabean Revolt. Hanukkah, which means "dedication" in Hebrew, begins on the 25th of Kislev on the Hebrew calendar and usually falls in November or December. Often called the Festival of Lights, the holiday is celebrated with the lighting of the menorah, traditional foods, games and gifts.

The tradition of eating black-eyed peas and greens has roots back to the Civil War era. Black-eyed peas represent prosperity, and the greens signify wealth. Enjoy the tradition!

Black-Eyed-Pea Salad

Ingredients

¼ C canola oil

2 T red wine vinegar

1 T Dijon mustard

½ tsp salt

½ tsp ground black pepper

2 (15-ounce) cans black-eyed peas, rinsed and drained

1 C chopped red onion

1 medium red bell pepper, seeded and chopped

1 clove garlic, minced

½ cup chopped fresh parsley

2 T chopped fresh oregano

In a small bowl, whisk together oil, vinegar, mustard, salt, and pepper. In a large bowl, combine peas, onion, bell pepper, garlic, parsley, and oregano. Add prepared dressing and toss to coat.

Good Luck New Year's Black-eyed Peas

Ingredients

2 cans 15.5 oz. Trappey's Jalapeno Black-eyed peas – do not drain

1 med onion chopped

1 med green bell pepper chopped

2 cloves garlic, minced

2/3 C Bloody Mary mix

1 10-oz pkg frozen, cooked, salad shrimp

4 T olive oil

Put olive oil in pot. Add chopped onion, bell pepper, and garlic.

Cook until tender.

Add peas and Bloody Mary mix.

Cook to a boil on medium heat.

Cover pot. Reduce heat and simmer for 20 minutes.

Add shrimp and cook on low for 10 more minutes, uncovered.

Serve over rice—your preference: mixture of wild, brown, or white rice.

Really good!