

Dear Friends:

Anyone else completely in the weeds? That is what Mark used to say when he waited tables and things got OVERWHELMINGLY BUSY! It seems like everyone is SUPER busy all the time. I know we are! I even considered not doing the adoptions this year, but then Logan reminded me about what is important and said, "Mom it is WHAT we DO! WHO we are!" He is even going to help with the purchasing again this year on his day off from school. Yep, he could sleep in and loll around all day, but instead a teenaged boy OFFERED to help! Can we count on you to do the same this year?

This is the Bates family's 19th year of adopting families with our family and friends and our 11th year adopting families through the Macomb Infant Preschool Program (MIPP). We have decided to completely adopt two families again this year. As usual, our two families this year desperately need our help! Their kids need more care and special items than most children and they have financial struggles. This year we have chosen to adopt the following deserving families with children with special needs:

FAMILY #1

Mom, Amanda (age 35) and Dad, Barry (age 33) have a family of six. This family found out about their unexpected fourth pregnancy in 2013. Since that time, the family has been struck by more tragedy and challenges than any family should have to bear. Their daughter, Meghan was born with a heart defect and was put on a ventilator immediately after birth. After a myriad of tests they determined that she had DiGeorge Syndrome. According to the Mayo Clinic, DiGeorge syndrome "...is a disorder caused by a defect in chromosome 22. It results in the poor development of several body systems. Medical problems commonly associated with DiGeorge syndrome include heart defects, poor immune system function, a cleft palate, complications related to low levels of calcium in the blood, and delayed development with behavioral and emotional problems." She was sent home and at six weeks of age she stopped breathing and was readmitted to the hospital where she had her heart surgery. She was in the hospital for over two months and suffered from seizures, a stroke, blood transfusions, had to have a heart cath and had to be resuscitated several times. Since that time she has had a second open heart surgery, had a feeding tube installed and has been in and out of the hospital.

When Meghan was four months old the family found out that they were expecting a fifth child due to a failed IUD. They found out that their expectant son, named Owen, had a fatal condition called "Limb Body Wall Complex" and at 33 weeks gestation, he was stillborn.

Meghan has an older Sister, Ashleigh, who is 3 ½ and an older Brother named Will who is age 10, and both of these siblings are healthy and average. Her eldest Brother, Andy is age 16 and has Autism Spectrum Disorder and is developmentally delayed. Mom is the primary care giver and Meghan requires constant care. Dad is employed as a carpenter. They are struggling to make ends meet, but do their best to care for their family.

FAMILY #2

Mom, Felicia (age 21) and Dad, Billy (age 23) have one child of their own named Faith (age 10 months) and are raising Mom's little Brother, Christopher. Her parents are not in the

picture and she is fighting for custody of Christopher who is 16 years old and has epilepsy. The house that a relative is letting them live in is in the process of being foreclosed. The daughter, Faith, has a hearing impairment and is developmentally delayed.

Mom works two jobs. By day she works a manufacturing position and in the evenings and on weekends she works for a fast food restaurant. Dad works for a local hardware store. They vary their work schedules so that one of them can be home at all times to care for Faith. They share a car that requires some repairs. The couple struggles with being unable to provide financially for their child and Christopher and is doing their best under difficult circumstances.

This year both of our families need: Winter coats, pajamas, winter clothing, shoes, socks, boots, hats, gloves, diapers & wipes, bedding/sheets, some need comforters, books and toys.

With everyone so overwhelmed, we have decided to only come to you only TWO TIMES this year via email. Due to positive feedback on this from last year, we are sending this initial email and will send one follow up. We hope that you will consider writing out your check immediately so you don't forget. We plan to do the majority of the shopping for our families on November 20th. We will send one additional email with an update on our donation status and then you will not hear from us unless you made a donation or financial pledge that requires follow up or when we send a "thank you"!

Whether you can donate \$5 or \$1,000, we will put it to the best use we can and the value that our combined funds and efforts can have to others less fortunate than ourselves is tremendous. We pool all of the funds and meet as many of the needs of these families as possible.

Kohl's on 26 Mile Road in Shelby Township, generously gives us significant discounts on the merchandise that we purchase in their store. As a result, everything bought at Kohl's cost pennies on the dollar. For the past several years they also made a \$500 contribution and they helped to wrap the gifts for our families. They have agreed to help again this year!

Additionally, we have other vendors that give us discounts or contributions and contribute yearly because they care. If we have more money than we need for these two deserving families, we will provide food and clothing gift cards to additional families, as there are many others in need and still more coming forward to ask for assistance.

Also, because we ask that checks be made payable to the memorial fund at the Shelby Community Foundation: **SCF - Jamie's Smiles (Christmas)** your contribution is tax deductible (please speak with a tax professional for details). If you prefer you can also contribute items, but these will not be tax deductible. **If you are interested in contributing, please email us with your commitment as soon as you can.**

Contributions can be made through PayPal! Contributions via PayPal can be made by going to www.shelbycommunityfoundation.org, then locate the "Make a Donation..." section on the right hand side of your screen and use the pull down to select "Jamie's Smiles' Christmas Fund" then follow the directions to complete your contribution. Of course you can still **send your check made out to SCF – Jamie's Smiles (Christmas) to us at: PO Box 183181, Shelby**

Township MI 48318 as well. We need to know what our budget will be to make purchases, so please send your check or make your commitment by Friday, November 13th!

Timing is important! We will be making the bulk of our purchases in just over two weeks so that we are able to provide our families with outside wear so that they are warm and to get our best discount.

For more information about Jamie's Smiles, please call Gretchen at 586/206-5556 or visit our website at www.JamiesSmiles.org and please bear in mind that we also accept new left over Christmas wrapping paper.

Thank you for time and consideration!

The Bates Family & Jamie's Smiles

(Mark, Gretchen, Logan & Sidney)

PS By way of background for those of you who are new to the invitation (please bear with us if you have seen this information before), for many years we have championed adopting families of special needs children through MIPP. This is the organization that gave Jameson such phenomenal care and therapy while he was with us and sick with Infantile Spasms. We choose needy families with children with special needs who need a "hand up." Often, people do not realize the financial, physical and emotional burden of raising special children. They are incredible! They are worth it! But fiscally speaking, they can set you back so that you can never recover. In the 19 months that we had Jamie, his care cost approximately \$40,000 out of pocket and we had EXCELLENT insurance. You can imagine what it does to people with lesser insurance, etc... Anyhow, we try to help mitigate some of these costs for a couple of families per year..... Please join us in making a difference in these people's lives...