



# THE LEAFLET

News from Family Giving Tree

## Holiday Wish Drive a Resounding Success!

Eureka! As you may have read in Family Giving Tree's recent press release, the 2016 Holiday Wish Drive set a record with over 76,000 gifts distributed. Some 1,000 drive leaders collected the gifts, which were then fulfilled through 7,000 volunteers to 350 support agencies.

"For the past 27 years, Family Giving Tree has expanded its holiday outreach to deserving Bay Area children and adults," said Jennifer Cullenbine, Family Giving Tree founder and CEO. "With the support of local organizations, corporations, social service agencies and volunteers, in 2016 we surpassed our ambitious goal. We love our loyal drive leaders and volunteers, who gave generously of their time and resources to make the holidays shine brighter for others."

Stephanie Black, Program Director at Community United San Jose, stated, "For the past six years, I have seen firsthand the incredible impact Family Giving Tree has on at-risk families in my neighborhood. For some of our children, this is the only gift they receive; it truly makes a difference in their lives. I sincerely thank Family Giving Tree and their volunteers and donors for making a lasting impression on those who need it most."

Another drive highlight was the first-time operation of two successful drop-off centers in San Francisco and Castro Valley, simplifying gift drop-offs for Bay Area donors outside of Silicon Valley.

## Volunteer Stories



### Changing Lives Through Acts of Kindness

By Vicki Stairs

*We often hear great stories from the families and volunteers we touch through the Holiday Wish Drive. Here are just two of those stories....*

**Marci:** While working in the warehouse, I overheard Michelle, a young, single mother, say she was hired through a temp agency to work at FGT for one day. Although she had been offered a 5 day job in a warm office, she decided to work in a cold warehouse instead. Apologizing for eavesdropping, I introduced myself and asked: Why would she turn down a week of guaranteed employment this close to Christmas? With excitement in her voice she told me her story. As a small child she remembered her parents struggling financially, so her expectations for Christmas were low, but each year she still somehow received Christmas gifts. At the time it didn't occur to her that the gifts came from generous donors. As a young adult, Michelle now wanted to help children just as she had been blessed, so she offered her time to Family Giving Tree. Part of her sacrifice included the loss of steady income so she could help make children's Holiday wishes come true.

**Diana:** In the warehouse, gifts were laid out on the cold floor in hundreds of rows, each with a hanging sign denoting the receiving agency. Volunteers came in the thousands to inventory, shop for, wrap and pack children's wishes. While training a group of volunteers, I met Denise, who told me her story. She first volunteered at FGT's Holiday Wish Drive as a young adult and member of Junior League. Later in college, she encouraged her classmates to volunteer along with her. Eventually, she married and had a family, but that did not stop her from volunteering. As her family grew, she introduced even her smallest children to the warehouse and, at the time I met her, she had just extended the invitation to her sister, brother-in-law and their children. As she told her story, I could not help but wonder if one of the gifts she had selected, wrapped, and bagged so many years before might have been the very same gift Michelle had received as a small child.

We may never know how our efforts will pay off, but with each act of kindness we have

the opportunity to touch many lives. For Michelle, receiving a gift fundamentally changed her life and gave her a desire to 'pay it forward.' For Denise and her family, they simply enjoyed spending time together knowing their efforts brought joy to many.

## Meet our Staff



### **Jake Manaloor** **Director of Development**

*Interviewed by Heather Monty*

*Jake joined Family Giving Tree in January 2017 and is already well versed in all things "FGT."*

*Jake is pictured here with FGT's Jeanne Clabaugh and Jessica McGill at the Holiday Wish Drive warehouse*

#### **Tell me a little about your past experience.**

I'm a 2003 graduate of the Indiana University McKinney School of Law in Indianapolis, Indiana. Prior to joining Family Giving Tree, I worked in both the non-profit and higher education arenas including roles with Florida International University, Indiana University and Purdue University in grant management and administration as well as in the areas of donor/alumni development (including annual giving, class campaigns, major gifts and special donor projects). Locally, I served as a Development Officer with the Silicon Valley Community Foundation. I earned a bachelor's in Business Administration, Human Resource Management and International Studies from the Indiana University Kelley School of Business in 2000.

#### **What drew you to FGT?**

The tangible impact as well as the lasting impressions - feelings of appreciation, thankfulness, empowerment and self worth - that the gift of a toy or backpack makes on a child is something that is invaluable. Being a part of a team that helps bring hope, joy, play and learning opportunities to youth is what drew me to FGT.

#### **What do you hope to bring to the organization?**

A passion, knowledge and commitment to continue building upon FGT's fundraising opportunities and capacity.

#### **A HWD related question: What was the best gift you received as a child and why?**

My first pair of ice hockey skates and a goalie stick. Learning to skate and to play the game of hockey was a fundamental part of growing up in Canada.

#### **BTS related question: What was your favorite subject in elementary school?**

Social Studies/Civics/History - using my colored pencils to draw and shade in geographic, political, as well as socio-economic maps and to learn about the global world in which we live.

#### **Anything else you might like to share in the newsletter?**

I grew up in Canada; love playing and watching sports - especially hockey, soccer, football and college basketball; Love to travel and cook; Enjoy spending time with my wonderful wife and son and friends and extended family.

## Toy Stories

### **From Monster High to Shopkins: Meet the Hot Toys of 2016**

*by Larry Loper*

*For 27 years, Family Giving Tree has had a front row seat to what's hot - and not - each year. Read on to learn more about the stars of this past season.*

**Monster High:** This Mattel franchise has been a monster hit (sorry) since its invention in 2010. The premise is simple: The offspring of well-known horror and science fiction creatures (such as Dracula, the Mummy, Medusa etc.) all attend a high school called Monster High.



Naturally, they get cute names and personalities, such as Draculaura – a vegan vampire who faints at the sight of blood. Family Giving Tree saw the most Monster High requests for dolls, invariably a specific named character. Style maven Clawdeen Wolf was quite popular – perhaps because her character “is bold, confident and clawesomely talented – with her own style center, The Fierce Salon.”

**Shopkins:** This mash-up between collectible figurines, shopping and just

plain cute has made this toy franchise a success since 2014. Founded in Melbourne, Australia by Moose Toys, Shopkins was inspired by the firm’s desire to build out a toy line-up for girls.

**Orbeez Ultimate Soothing Spa:** Yes -- it’s a toy! Imagine a brightly colored, battery-powered mini foot spa that circulates absorbent, squishy beads around your child’s feet. (What a great way to accelerate your child’s path to those mani-pedis!)

**Paw Patrol:** Born as a Canadian TV show for children, Paw Patrol consists of a pack of animated, heroic dogs and their ten-year-old human leader, Ryder. The dogs are ‘service dogs in training’ and their respective skills mimic those of a police officer, firefighter, construction worker, etc. The show moved quickly into the United States and beyond, and was tailor-made for toys, games, DVDs and online engagement, in 2015 alone generating some U.S. \$250 million in merchandise sales.

**Crack the Glass Ceiling:** While the traditional male-dominated characters of Batman, Superman, Spider-Man, Ironman, Ninja Turtles, Captain America and others continue their dominance, it is heartening to see female superheroes break through. Due in part to higher profiles on television and movies, both Supergirl and Wonder Woman had a very “strong” showing in 2016.

**The Classics Roll On:** And what of the classics? Barbie, Legos, Fisher Price and board games – still huge. While it’s perhaps too late for you stock-pickers to pad your IRA accounts, from our view the Star Wars and Frozen franchises will continue to reap huge profits for Disney.

**Sports-themed Toys:** At this point you may be wondering – with the success of all these dolls, figurines and Web-driven toys, do kids actually get outside and play anymore? The answer is a resounding yes. Traditional sports balls for soccer, football, and basketball are top items. Sports jerseys, hats, and other branded items for local sports teams such as the 49ers, Giants, Raiders and Warriors remain in high demand. Same story for active wheeled toys such as skateboards and scooters, still hugely popular.

**Predictions for 2017:** If 2016 presented you with challenges tracking down that must-have toy, you may want to stockpile now and avoid the 2017 holiday frenzy. Try Furbacca – a mash-up of the Star Wars Chewbacca character and sassy, interactive Furbies. Barbie’s Hello Dreamhouse is one of many new toys adding apps and technology to the play experience. ‘Hello Dreamhouse’ even works with Wi-Fi and includes, among other gadgets, a voice-activated elevator. Consider a top-of-the-line Legos Creator set, like the working Ferris Wheel? It clocks in at a mere 2,464 pieces and \$200. Finally, drones will continue to gain in popularity, especially as products like Air Wars Battle Drones let children compete in remote-controlled aerial dogfights.

Seems the only challenge in buying and caching that hard-to-find gift for the next holiday season is an age-old dilemma – what happens when the kids change their minds?



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**April Reminder:** Check [www.familygivingtree.org](http://www.familygivingtree.org) for important Back-to-School Drive dates and information!

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