

HOLIDAY WISH DRIVE 2025

Community Connection Chronicle



Family Giving Tree™



A SEASON OF JOY, A TIME OF NEED

The holiday season is a time defined by diverse cultural traditions through the gathering with loved ones, ornate decorations, and the joy of giving and receiving gifts. But for thousands of families in the Bay Area, this season brings a profound sense of "otherness." For some, the barrier is painfully simple. As Marisol Barahona, Community Services Supervisor at Project Hope, learned from one family, the reason they couldn't accept a donated Christmas tree was that "we rent a room from an apartment and we don't have anywhere to put one."

This feeling is especially acute for children. Debbie Michels of Jewish Family Services of Silicon Valley, explains, when children return to school after the winter break, playground conversation naturally turns to the gifts they received. For a child from a family considered low-income, this moment can be isolating. "...for a child to be able to say, 'I got something,' you know, is really impactful to feel a part of the culture, to not feel left out, to not feel different."

This prevalent feeling of otherness is due in no small part to the Bay Area's stark economic contrast between a widening gap of stagnant low-income wages and the high cost of essentials, creating a holiday that falls short of joyful. For over 35 years, Family Giving Tree's Holiday Wish Drive has stepped in to close this gap—not just the financial one, but the emotional one, acting as a bridge to restore a sense of belonging, joy, and dignity.



THE POWER OF A PERSONAL WISH

The Gift That Says "You Are Seen"

Sometimes, the simplest wish holds the deepest meaning. Annette from New Hope for Youth told us about a teen who wished for a rice cooker, saying, '...she sacrificed her gift to give something for her mom because her mom works long hours...'. Your gift isn't just an item; it's love, care, and honoring a recipient's actual needs and dreams.

For an older adult living on a fixed income, a simple gift can be that refreshing moment that delivers feelings of dignity. Justine from Jewish Family Services of Silicon Valley shared a powerful example: "...to go out and buy fresh linens or towels is a luxury... And so to have fresh bath towels or a fresh set of sheets to crawl into bed at night, what a gift."

The Holiday Wish Drive is distinguished by its promise to deliver on the recipient's actual wish. It tells a child, a senior, or a parent that someone in the community cares about them, regardless of who or where they are.



ON THE FRONT LINES OF HOPE

A Complete Circle of Care: The Bay Area's Ecosystem of Community Support

There isn't a single agency that can solve issues stemming from economic hardship alone. Many agencies focus on critical foundations for survival, such as a safe place to sleep, food, or legal support.

Through our partner agencies that help us identify families and individuals experiencing hardships that would have prevented them from receiving their wish.

Family Giving Tree has been able to serve as many as over 2,200,000 individuals since 1990.



Jewish Family Services of Silicon Valley

JFSSV provides foundational support for some of our community's most vulnerable.

Their work is powerfully illustrated by the story of a Ukrainian mother who arrived with her child while her husband was stranded in Turkey due to immigration complexities. Feeling "very lost and very alone," she was taken under the wing of JFSSV case managers. They provided safe, subsidized housing, helped fulfill her wish of finding a job as a cake decorator, and secured an apartment within walking distance of her work and her son's school.

JFSSV is also the only agency in Santa Clara County currently serving nearly 350 Holocaust survivors, most of whom live below the poverty line. Their case managers do heroic work, like helping an 89-year-old survivor and her disabled son secure clean, safe housing.

This holiday season, JFSSV will partner with Family Giving Tree to address another essential need of many of their clients during their resettlement journey: a sense of belonging.



Project HOPE, an initiative founded by the City of San José, operates on a simple but powerful principle; "... Showing the communities that they have the power that it takes to make the changes, and we kind of guide them through the process," explains Marisol Barahona, Community Services Supervisor. Their team works in overlooked neighborhoods, empowering residents to become the voice of change in building a safer San Jose. A busy street that needs a speed bump or a street that could be made safe again with better lighting—these are the changes that individuals, many of whom are Holiday Wish Drive recipients, have been rallying for through the program.

For a teenager involved with Project Hope, the chance to work for the program during summer break and receive a paycheck changed their circumstances and perspective.

Marisol recounted, "We were asking all the kids, what are you gonna do with your paycheck?... And one of the youth said, 'I'm gonna buy groceries for my family, and then I'm gonna buy Christmas gifts for my parents.' This kid worked all summer... to buy Christmas gifts for his parents."



The Fellowship Inc.

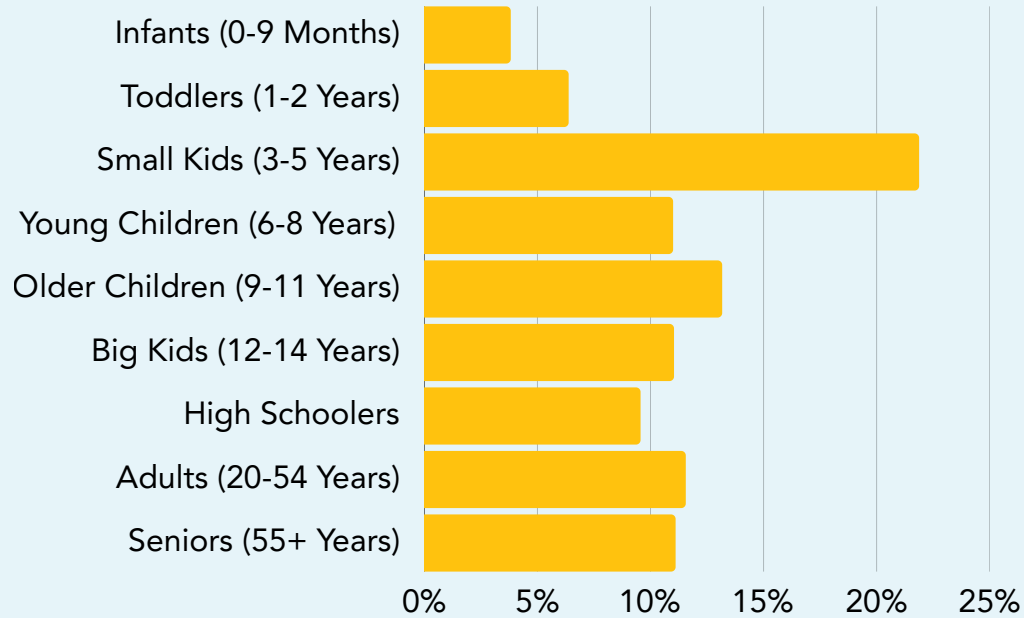
Founded on faith and a fierce commitment to action, The Fellowship Inc. was born in the midst of the chaos of the COVID-19 epidemic, running toward the crisis when others could not. Their work is guided by a core belief in tangible action over passive sympathy. While helping provide the essential survival needs for individuals facing housing insecurity year-round, The Fellowship Inc. partners with FGT during the holidays to deliver a specific, wished-for gift—a personal and direct message of hope.

This year, many of those served by The Fellowship Inc. wished for tents, sleeping bags, and jackets. The impact delivered involves not only warmth during the winter cold, but also a powerful affirmation of a person's humanity and sense of worth.

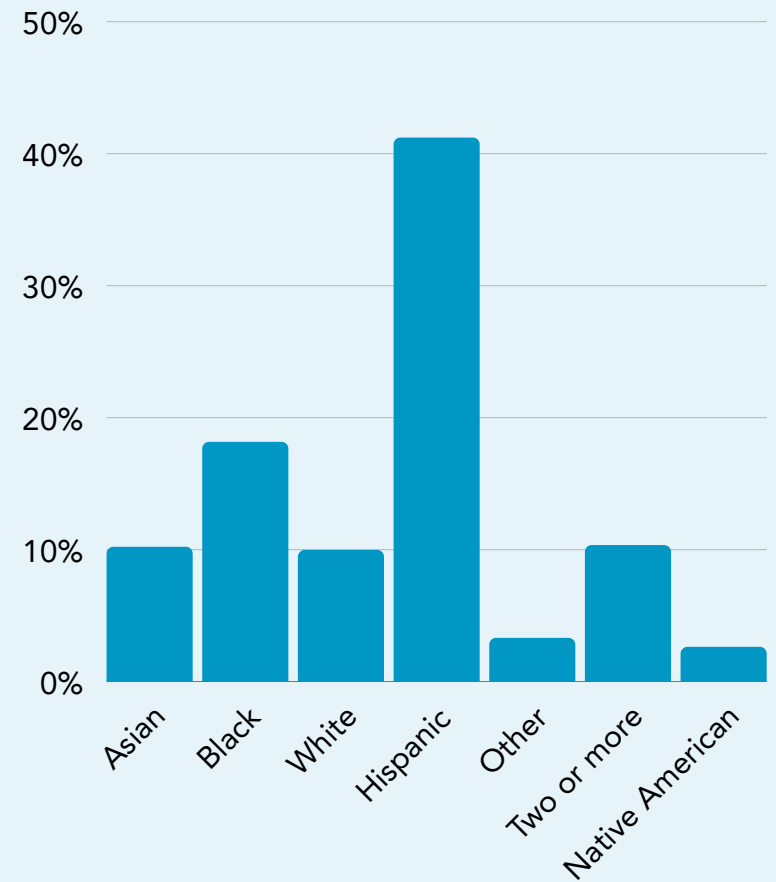


DEMOGRAPHICS

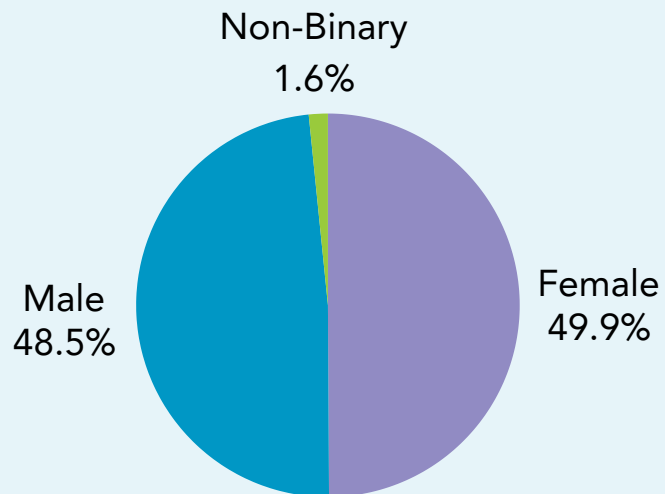
Gifts Distributed by Age



Ethnicities Served



Gender



THE JOURNEY OF A WISH

Bringing Joy. Growing Hope. Creating Community.



FGT chooses a nonprofit agency



Agency interviews child to define their exact holiday wish



Agency enters child's wish onto FGT's website



FGT prints wish cards



Individual goes shopping to select the gift for recipient child



Individuals select wish cards to fulfill



Drive Leaders display wish cards on holiday trees or bulletin boards etc.



FGT sends packs of wish cards to companies who lead a Holiday Wish Drive (Drive Leader)



Agencies deliver gift wishes to recipient children



Individual brings purchased gift back to the Drive Leader



Drive Leader delivers the gifts to FGT's Community Hub



FGT volunteers sort, wrap and bag entire agencies gifts



Agencies come to FGT Community Hub to pick up their gifts

JOIN US IN DELIVERING JOY

This year, our goal is to connect our community by providing **50,000 gifts**. Each gift is a chance to tell someone they matter. Each gift is a building block for a stronger, more compassionate community.

You have the power to close the gap for a family in need. When you grant a wish, you are not just giving a gift; you are sending a message of hope and kindness that has the potential to inspire others throughout our community. You can **grant a wish** by visiting fgt.org to enter our Virtual Giving Tree, **lead a drive** and be the compassionate leader your company, school, or neighborhood needs, or **donate** to power the entire cycle of hope and dignity that makes this work possible.



[Grant a Wish](#)

[Lead a Drive](#)

[Donate](#)

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Jess Gutierrez

Chief Financial Officer

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Evelyn Huynh

Director of Community Resource Development

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Graphic Designer

Shannon Fey

Volunteer & Program Operations Lead

Tennille Manning

Bookkeeper/Payroll Specialist

MAKE A WISH COME TRUE TODAY

Bringing Joy.
Growing Hope.
Creating Community.



Family Giving Tree™

fgt.org

Charity
Navigator



FOUR-STAR

Platinum
Transparency
2025

Candid.

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