



THE LEAFLET

News from Family Giving Tree

2017 Back-to-School Drive Scores an A+!



Family Giving Tree surpassed its aggressive 2017 goal to collect, stuff and distribute 40,000 backpacks with grade-appropriate school supplies. The final tally was 40,546.

Based on public school data regarding student eligibility for free/reduced school lunches, Family Giving Tree estimates that some 400,000 Bay Area students need donated backpacks and school supplies. Annually, we strive to help a larger and larger percentage of that underserved population. This year, with the help of 1,052 volunteers and 485 Drive Leaders, some 325 qualifying schools and agencies throughout the Bay Area received backpacks. For many of their students, these fully stocked backpacks were the only resource to start a new school year with the tools and confidence to succeed.

“Support from NBC Bay Area and Telemundo 48 was a huge factor in beating our target,” said Family Giving Tree Co-Founder and Executive Director Jennifer Cullenbine. “As part of a national ‘Supporting Our Schools’ initiative, the two Bay Area TV stations really got behind our efforts and promoted the drive via newscasts, on-air promotions, websites and social media. Add that coverage to our usual loyal base of corporate sponsors, volunteers and Drive Leaders, and you get a record year for helping Bay Area kids.”

2017 Back-to-School Award Winners!

Each winner made the highest donation within their category based on company size. Congratulations to all! We could not have done it without you and 40,546 students are off to a great start at school this fall!

Absolute Attendance (100 or less employees) - **Pi Beta Phi - San Jose Alumnae Club**

Raising the Bar (100-499 employees) - **F5 Networks**

Paying it Forward (500-999 employees) - **Nokia**

High Five (1,000-1,999 employees) - **Palo Alto NetworksAlto Networks**

Honor Club (2,000-4,999 employees) - **Cadence Design Systems, Inc.**

Standing Ovation (More than 5,000 employees) - **Amazon Lab126**

Consider it Done Award (Most Improved) - **Nokia**

Over Achiever (Individual Youth/Youth Group/Youth Club) - **Gandhi Kids**

**The 2017
Holiday Wish Drive is here!**

Drive Leader Registration
is now open!

<http://familygivingtree.org/get-involved/lead-a-drive>



Profile



FGT Free Spirit - Doug Harney

By Larry Loper

Look at the photo – Doug Harney of Family Giving Tree, relaxing in the back of the new FGT truck. Doug appears half in bright sunlight; half in dark shadows. Doug will tell you that is no accident – it’s a perfect metaphor for his life – but more on that in a moment.

How in four short years did Doug Harney become one of the most recognized and popular faces at FGT? First of all – he’s everywhere! As FGT’s primary driver, Doug picks up and delivers materials to our drive leaders; makes sure company and organization ‘builds’ have plenty of supplies; works in the FGT warehouse for

Back-to-School and Holiday Wish drives; and much more.

You’ve also more than likely spotted Doug at one of his many other jobs. Depending on the season, Doug handles high-profile security assignments at nearby Shoreline Amphitheatre, and satisfies his passion for fire as a fireworks technician for Pyro Spectacular, North America’s largest fireworks company. (Fact: As early as seven, Doug was tweaking so-called ‘safe and sane’ fireworks to create neighborhood shows in his birthplace of Oakland.) Or you might see him keeping an experienced eye on the tipsy tailgaters at Stanford and Santa Clara universities. He even squeezes in time at the Golden Mushroom restaurant in Santa Clara (his current hometown), where he has worked off and on since the 1980’s .

Doug is also hard to miss. Rarely seen without his trademark tie-dye shirts, of which he boasts a deep collection, you would be tempted to paint him as a child of the 60’s. Doug would gently (it’s his style) disagree, and tell you he is purely a product of the 80’s (that decade again). He would also tell you that, like so many others, he had to make his own dark journey through the abuse of the 80’s to appreciate the light and life he enjoys today.

“Back then, you wouldn’t invite me to help you *move furniture*,” Doug cracks with a smile. “I was just an angry, frustrated man – and no, not even a man, an upset *boy*.” Doug immediately credits his four-year relationship with Alcoholics Anonymous (or ‘Friends of Bill’ in Doug-speak) for his current happiness. Joining AA taught Doug several lessons, including ‘enjoy the moment’ and ‘bring joy wherever possible.’

All of a sudden – Doug’s multiple jobs make perfect sense. At Shoreline, Doug loves nothing better than plucking four pre-teens from the archipelago of the \$20 lawn seats -- and spirited them to the best view of Demi Lovato in the house. (He can only imagine the following Monday at their local junior high – where telling the story makes *them* rock stars for a day!) And what brings more sheer joy than fireworks on the Fourth of July?

Luckily for Family Giving Tree, the organization holds its own in the joy-making department – which keeps Doug coming back for more. Take the time he struggled to find a down-and-out family in the outskirts of San Martin. Doug will never forget the rundown shack, and fighting his way through locked farm gates and snapping pit bulls, to deliver an ‘Operation Reindeer’ package of clothing, gifts and food. Or the boy at that hovel who briefly ignored the gift of a

new G.I. Joe to grab something much more precious: Fresh socks and underwear.

Doug easily remembers what brings him to work every day. When he brushes his teeth each morning, a Christmas card in a child's hand hangs on his bathroom mirror. That child ran the length of the FGT warehouse to hand-deliver the card, so grateful was she for the gifts received from Family Giving Tree.

The message? Enjoy Doug while you can, and look for him everywhere. In the spirit of 'enjoying the moment', Doug shuts down his crazy work schedule (he once worked 118 hours in a single week!) from mid-January to May 1. During his break, you might find him at the Harney family home in Redding, California; speaking by invitation at AA meetings across the West; or attending a KISS concert. (Yes, that 80's influence was strong! Doug still proudly claims membership in the KISS Army.)

But for now, FGT gets the biggest part of him. His heart.

Every year, Family Giving Tree is very fortunate to accept donated warehouse space to house our Drives. The search is now in full swing for space for the 2017 Holiday Wish Drive. We need 100,000 square feet to collect, sort and distribute 80,000 gifts. Can you help?

Please email Operations Director, Al Galan at al@familygivingtree.org. Thanks!



Drive Spotlight

Key Dates for the 2017 Holiday Wish Drive

Mark your calendars!

- Oct 4 - Drive Leader Registration NOW OPEN
- Oct 18 - Volunteer Registration for Drive Leaders opens @ 8:00AM
- Nov 1 - Public Volunteer Registration opens @ 8:00AM
- Nov 1 - Drive Leader Launch - East Bay
- Nov 3 - Drive Leader Launch - Milpitas
- Nov 6 - Drive Leader Launch - San Francisco
- Nov 8 - Drive Leader Launch - Peninsula
- Nov 9 - Drive Leader Launch - East Bay/Dublin
- Dec 11 - Warehouse Drop-off Day

As other dates and information become available, they will be posted on the FGT website. Check familygivingtree.org regularly for the latest Holiday Wish Drive updates as we strive to reach our aggressive goal of 80,000 gifts.

Meet the Board

Niall Fagan: Embracing Change

by *Larry Loper*

Few Bay Area nonprofits can claim a board member who is both a respected auditor with Grant Thornton – and Irish! That's exactly who Family Giving Tree found in Niall Fagan. His interesting story deserves telling...

One might guess that Niall's decision to join the FGT board came from a personal tradition of volunteerism – but he modestly says that is not true. His motivation to get involved with



Family Giving Tree came as part of his 'temporary' job assignment in the United States. He found so many things different here - dress code in the office (or lack thereof!); working hours; even scheduled lunch breaks - that he quickly adapted to fit in with his U.S. peers. And he made a bigger decision: To reach out in the community, to network, and to 'build his personal brand' a different way.

The networking paid off quickly. On only his second date sparked by social media, Niall met his American wife-to-be, Julia. Son Tiernan followed, and the once-temporary Bay Area job

assignment became permanent, reinforcing Niall's commitment to the community. But - where to invest his time?

As a child, Niall remembered small-scale gift operations in his native Ireland, usually managed by the local church or fire department. At Grant Thornton in the Bay Area, Niall discovered a larger-scale version of the same principle: Family Giving Tree. Niall began as a donor, plucking wish requests from the Grant Thornton tree. (To this day, Julia still enjoys taking Tiernan to shop for FGT gifts, tags in hand.)

Niall eventually filled in for one season as a Drive Leader, taking a bigger stake in Grant Thornton's contribution. It's not surprising that, when Niall attended a Google-sponsored 'Board Match' event to help nonprofits meet prospective board members, Niall found a familiar brand: Family Giving Tree. Things moved quickly, and soon Niall was welcomed onto the FGT board. With his background in business and accounting, he immediately played an active and valuable role on the FGT Board's Finance committee.

Come holiday time, don't expect to find Niall in a green eyeshade, scribbling accounts beside a coal fire, Bob Cratchit style. Niall dove into last year's Holiday Wish Drive as a hands-on warehouse volunteer, on one occasion unloading box trucks well after hours. He also enjoyed introducing Tiernan to the world of volunteering, bringing the one-year old to the Holiday Wish Drive and Back to School warehouses.

Asked to comment on the one thing that stands out for him regarding Family Giving Tree, Niall remarked, "It's the sheer scale of the operation. I visited the FGT warehouse on 'Delivery Day' of last year- December 12, when all the drive leaders show up -- and was blown away by the massive pile of gifts. It's just remarkable for such a small organization to make such a big impact."

With FGT helping some 80,000 children and adults in 2017 - and with Niall as a board member - one might say Niall has expanded his Bay Area network beyond his wildest dreams.

Check out Family Giving Tree's new website! We hope you like the new look!

www.familygivingtree.org



