

The ChIPs (Children of Incarcerated Persons) Program

For the past thirty-plus years, the ChIPs Program has helped make Christmas for children of incarcerated persons, frequently overlooked kids, every year. Have you supported us in the past? Have you ever wondered who you've helped?

My father was incarcerated for almost 6 years and died shortly after his release. But while he was in there I still got a present from him...and I'm ever so thankful....I couldn't imagine how you helped my Dad by enabling him to give me a present every year; those are some of the only good memories of him I have! So from me and many others like me, thank you thank you thank you.

Children of prison inmates can live lonely lives. It's easy to believe that a parent you never see just doesn't care.

Thank you so much for making it possible for me to give a gift to my son. He contacted me two years ago when he found out about me. I'll be meeting him for the first time when I give him his gift.

Inmates also find themselves feeling isolated and abandoned, unable to provide for or to be a part of their families. Being able to offer their children a gift at the Christmas visit gives the inmates an opportunity for connection, for a sliver of normalcy in their family relations.

I now have 3 grandsons....The older one has so enjoyed getting a gift from me each Christmas. This is a terrific outreach program that helps to bring families closer together. Thank you.

Studies have shown that parolees are significantly more likely to integrate back into society if they are able to maintain relationships with their families. The ChIPs program creates positive experiences on which to build a foundation for those relationships.

Both the families and the incarcerated parents themselves are deeply grateful for the opportunity that the ChIPs program affords them. The prisons count the number of gifts needed for each age and gender group. Volunteers collect your gift donations, and use your monetary donations to supplement the gifts provided. Once the presents are sorted, they're brought to the prisons, and the inmates get the chance to choose one gift for each child on their list. Usually the inmate is a parent. Sometimes a grandparent. Sometimes even a big brother or sister.

I would like to express my gratitude to you and all of those folks who made the Christmas party a warm and festive environment for my

children....It is very clear that a lot of planning and preparation went into the Christmas party and it was obvious by the outcome. I was pleasantly surprised by all the details that made it a "child friendly" party. My children left with a small piece of joy by being able to share some precious time with their Daddy at this special time of year.

At the Men's Prison in Concord, once the gift is chosen, volunteers wrap it. The prison then throws a party! The family visits, and the inmates are able to give presents to their children. The CHIPS program also includes an age-appropriate book to go with each gift, helping to promote literacy within this sometimes underprivileged population.

Thank you very much for your help. Without you this would not be possible for me and I would be left out of my children's Christmas. You're in my prayers and hopes that you will continue to do this for inmates in the future.

Here's what you can do:

You may drop off gifts or monetary donations at your church. The delegates to the Diocesan Convention will bring your gifts to the Convention on **November 7th** where they will be transported to Blass Clubhouse at St. Paul's School for sorting. The dates for sorting are tentatively set for mid-November. (Call 432 7679 after November 1st for more information)

There are many other ways you can help:

1. You can purchase a gift directly or contribute \$20. If you decide to make a monetary donation, please make out your check to the Diocese of New Hampshire with CHIPS written on the memo line of the check.
2. You can volunteer to collect gifts and serve as your parish's contact.
3. You can help sort the gifts at St. Paul's School.
4. You can help with wrapping of the gifts at the New Hampshire State Prison for Men in Concord. (The date for wrapping has not yet been set.)

Thank you so much. It's not often I'm brought to tears, but this means more than I could possibly explain. Again, thank you. Not only from me, but my children also.

For more information, or if you wish to volunteer, please contact me, Margaret Mackie-Ciancio, at 603 432-7679 or at mmciancio@comcast.net.

Gift Guidelines

We group gifts according to the following age groups:
birth to 1; ages 2 to 4; ages 5 to 7; ages 8-11;
and ages 12-15

Gifts should not exceed \$20 (**original retail value**).

One \$20 gift is preferable to four \$5 gifts as it is difficult to group items together to equal a \$20 gift.

If you don't want to purchase a \$20 gift, any monetary donation will be gladly accepted.

Books are a separate category and our goal is to provide each child with a gift **and** a book. (both hard cover and paperback books are appropriate)

If you purchase a gift that requires batteries, **please** purchase those as well and attach them to the gift. It's so discouraging to receive a gift with no batteries.

Consider buying a gift that would be appropriate for both boys and girls such as balls or board games.

Don't forget the older children. It is often easier to buy gifts for younger children. There is always a shortage of gifts for older children.

No used items, homemade items, or gift cards can be accepted.

The following items are NOT acceptable: jewelry, balloons, crayons, play dough, glue, bubbles, make up, long sticks, knitting needles, crochet hooks, or paint brushes, glass items, clothing, sharp tools or toy weapons of any kind.

Thank you,
Margaret Mackie-Ciancio