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## **Cranes of Care: Spreading Joy One Fold at a Time**

The sterile environment of a hospital is often defined by what is missing: the warmth of a home, the resonance of a familiar voice, and the simple knowledge that one hasn't been forgotten by the world outside. I first felt this void in the fluorescent-lit hallways of the University of Kansas Medical Center. After my father suffered a stroke, I lived in that silence alongside my mother. We navigated a terrifying landscape of neurological uncertainty, and in those long hours of waiting, I found myself wishing for a sign, any small gesture, to let us know we weren't alone in our struggle. This personal encounter with the isolation of a medical crisis was the seed; however, the ripple did not truly begin until I stepped into the role of a caregiver myself.

During my CNA clinicals, I moved through facilities performing the essential, yet often mechanical, tasks of healthcare. I saw firsthand that while medicine can address a physical ailment, it often leaves the soul untouched. One afternoon, during a rare quiet moment, I sat with a resident who seemed particularly weighed down by the heavy fog of isolation. Almost by instinct, I began folding a square of paper. With a few precise creases, a small origami crane took shape. When I placed it in her hand, the transformation was instantaneous. Her reaction, a mixture of surprise, recognition, and deep, tearful joy remained with me. Her words served as a call to action: "Us old people need more people like you; we don't get visitors often." It was a revelation: kindness does not require an exhaustive blueprint; it requires intentionality.

### **The Inception of the Ripple**

On August 31, 2025, I decided that this singular moment of connection needed to be scaled. I founded *Cranes of Care* with a specific mission: to ensure that the elderly and the ill in our

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community feel valued, appreciated, and seen. I began by recruiting ten students from my school, but the movement quickly transcended the walls of a single institution. To date, we have mobilized over 60 volunteers from across the Kansas City metro, creating a diverse network of young leaders committed to the art of empathy.

Our project is deceptively simple but deeply profound in its execution. We gather to fold origami cranes and write personalized letters, which we then hand-deliver to residents and patients. We chose the crane because, in many cultures, it is a symbol of healing, longevity, and hope. But more than the paper itself, our project is about the visit. We recognized that the elderly often suffer most from a sense of social isolation. By bringing a flock of color into a beige hospital room, we are providing a tangible reminder that they are still part of our community.

## **Addressing a Silent Crisis**

The choice to focus on the elderly was not accidental; it was a response to a documented public health crisis. According to the U.S. Surgeon General's Advisory on Loneliness and Isolation, social disconnection is as dangerous to human health as smoking 15 cigarettes a day (Murthy, 2023). In long-term care facilities, this loneliness epidemic is even more acute. Research indicates that nearly 40% of residents in these facilities experience symptoms of depression, often exacerbated by a lack of consistent social engagement with younger generations (National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, 2020).

By bringing high school students into these spaces, *Cranes of Care* creates intergenerational ripples. These interactions provide what psychologists call "social buffering," where positive social encounters can actually lower cortisol levels and improve the immune response in elderly patients. We aren't just delivering paper; we are delivering a clinical necessity.

## **Measuring the Ripple: Partnerships and Progress**

The strength of a ripple is defined by the depth of the community it touches. Since our inception, we have served over 1,200 patients across ten different facilities, including high-acuity environments like Children's Mercy and the KU Medical Center, as well as local retirement homes. This scale was made possible by the support of our local ecosystem. We have partnered with local businesses such as Sarpino's Pizzeria and Hy-Vee, whose contributions have fueled our volunteer sessions and community events.

Furthermore, we believe that kindness is most effective when it is collaborative. We have worked alongside established non-profits like *The Gift of Life*, which focuses on organ donation, and the *Zcharia Memorial Foundation*, which supports Leukemia patients. These partnerships ensure that our "ripple" contributes to a larger wave of support for Kansas City families.

Our impact is also seasonally responsive. In October, our volunteers shifted their focus to breast cancer awareness, folding hundreds of vibrant pink cranes to symbolize solidarity with those in oncology wards at the KU Cancer Center. Similarly, during the holiday season, we hand-delivered cranes made from festive wrapping paper while singing carols at retirement homes, an initiative we coined "Cranes of Care-oling."

Beyond our physical visits, our impact has taken a financial form. Through community outreach, we have raised \$300, which was donated to Hope Lodge KC and the KU Cancer Center. These funds were specifically raised to provide transportation for cancer patients, addressing the physical barriers to care while our cranes address the emotional ones.

## **The Personal Transformation**

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Before *Cranes of Care*, I struggled to find service opportunities that truly resonated with me. Many felt like box-ticking exercises that lacked a heartbeat. This project has rejuvenated my spirit and transformed my perspective on leadership. I have watched my peers evolve from hesitant volunteers into empathetic advocates. They have seen, in real-time, how their presence can visibly alter an individual's state of mind. One moment that always motivates me is when a lady at Village Shalom sat us down and talked to us about her story and how grateful she was for over an hour.

## **Conclusion: A Foreseeable Future**

Kindness is not a stagnant act; it is kinetic energy. When we fold a crane, we are not just creasing paper; we are folding our time, our empathy, and our respect into a gift for another human being. My father's recovery and my subsequent CNA training taught me that the most difficult parts of life are made bearable by the presence of community.

*Cranes of Care* is my way of being the person I wish had walked into my father's hospital room months ago. It is a reminder that while we cannot always cure the illness, we can always care for the person. As we move forward, this ongoing mission has no plans of stopping. The ripple will only grow wider, carried on the wings of thousands of paper birds and the hearts of students committed to the simple act of showing up.

Pictures



For more amazing pictures and videos please check out [@cranesofcare](#) on Instagram!

**Works Cited**

Murthy, V. H. (2023). *Our Epidemic of Loneliness and Isolation: The U.S. Surgeon General's Advisory on the Healing Effects of Social Connection and Community*. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine. (2020). *Social Isolation and Loneliness in Older Adults: Opportunities for the Health Care System*. The National Academies Press. <https://doi.org/10.17226/25663>.

***What is your kindness project? – who, what, when...***

My project is ongoing. Both of my parents have done a lot of volunteering over the years and through their example and active encouragement I have begun to do so as well. For me, supporting our neighbors in need is especially important. In Missouri, according to the U.S. Census Bureau, the state average of poverty is ~13.6%. About two years ago, I helped start an eye clinic which has really become my kindness project. It is a joint venture with the Lions Club and Catholic Charities. Tasks that I perform regularly include collecting eyeglasses, sorting them into bi-focal or single vision bins, cleaning them, and building collection boxes that are distributed throughout the 27 counties service area. I have also been doing some data collecting and compiling.

Missouri is one of only six states where it is legal to redistribute prescription eyeglasses out to the public, sadly this is not the case in Kansas. The first few clinics we held were at Catholic Charities in Kansas City, MO. We had solid turnouts and, in the late summer, we conducted a back-to-school event where we invited people from both MO & KS and we had over 200 appointments! Feedback so far has been very positive and I am quite proud and pleased in my small but integral role in making this all happen. It has been particularly gratifying seeing the project move from being talked about to actually being implemented and impacting so many people to this point.

***How did it/does it make a ripple to change the world?***

A mere pair of eyeglasses can be the catalyst to gain or keep employment and children to excel in school. With the cost of single vision glasses being between \$196-\$300 most families or individuals living in poverty simply cannot afford this necessity.

One client was a large young family with four kids, a mom, and grandma. When the mom checked in the Lions Club ladies said she really should not be driving because her vision was not good at all. But the family could not afford glasses. The mom, three kids and grandma all needed corrective glasses. I uploaded a picture of the family and you can see how happy this one act of kindness made a whole family. Another client that made a big impression was a veteran who had been living on the streets. Catholic Charities heavily assisted him in securing a place to live and enrolled him in job training to work as a bus driver. He was very excited to start his new job. He was offered a position at a local school district but unfortunately failed the eye test.

He had no money for an eye exam nor the necessary corrective eyeglasses. He went to one of our eye clinics and walked out with not just a couple of pairs of eyeglasses but the dignity of being able to provide for himself - a dignity quite like what he experienced while serving his country in the US military. Those eyeglasses were the catalyst that kept him housed and gainfully employed. It is easy to talk about results in terms of total numbers of people served. However, his story and the young family put a real "face" on what we are trying to

accomplish and how kindness can have a “ripple effect” in one’s life that has significant consequences for them and everyone they encounter moving forward.

***How did the ripple impact you and others?***

The impact of the eye clinic and its mission on myself and others has been profound.

I helped with the first eye clinic and the Lions Club members, who are all retired older adults, were surprised how many glasses my friend and I could process in one sitting. From that we grew it into a high schooler service project and we had nearly 500 volunteers help clean and process the donated glasses. At the first clinic we had a few hundred pairs of glasses. This last year we processed over 8,000 pairs of glasses. Mr. Mickey Beach, president of Red Bridge Lion Club said “We are so surprised at how many high school kids are coming to help process glasses. Clubs from across MO are wanting to replicate what Liz and the high school volunteers are accomplishing here in Kansas City.”

Personally, it helped me realize how much can be accomplished through action rather than just talk. It has also made me focus more sharply on what it really means to be a citizen of a community. Mahatma Gandhi once said that "The true measure of any society can be found in how it treats its most vulnerable members." The United States, when at its best, has been a country in which its citizens see a need, “roll up their sleeves,” and do what they can to be impactful - leaving a situation much better than they found it. And I am seeing this at the eye mission.

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This experience has also made me realize that volunteering is not just something that you do, it becomes part of who you are. I have experienced countless highs and a few lows in my life so far and I want to regularly be there for others in whatever manner they might require. I am planning on my upcoming college experience being more than just book learning but a place where I can connect, support, transform, and be transformed.

Finally, myself and a few others working at the clinic have discussed how better connected we feel with people in the wider world including those who come for eye exams and glasses. The Covid pandemic made many kids my age feel a bit isolated and cut off from others. Catholic Social Teaching, in part, describes how we should feel a sense of solidarity with everyone regardless of their backgrounds. Although I can't solve all of their problems or be able to fully repay our veterans for the freedoms and privileges they have provided me, I can be kind, see their need and continue to do my part to help. In the picture I'm submitting with my essay I'm sorting glasses at the first eye clinic wearing one of my favorite t-shirts "One Can Do So Much" printed on it and it applies to everyone, including high school kids.

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## Children's Mercy Toy Drive

My kindness project is the Children's Mercy Toy Drive for ██████████ High School, which I created last year, to give back to those who have given so much to me. When I started high school, I discovered the opportunity to volunteer through various clubs and activities. This revelation fueled a desire to give back to those who have aided me in the past. Last year, I became the president of Interact Club at ██████████ High School, a club that volunteers within the community, and the vessel through which I founded the toy drive. My club sponsor, ██████████ ██████████, says, "This passion for 'service above self' has led ██████████ to lead our club with integrity and excellence in teamwork and collaboration... She leads by example. She is faithful and consistent... I am so proud of her commitment to encourage others to serve." Since my freshman year, I have completed over 163 volunteer hours at Interact Club events.

I feel that the work I am doing is very rewarding, so I wanted to come up with something of my own. I specifically wanted to display an immense amount of gratitude to the doctors and staff at Children's Mercy Hospital in Kansas City. Since birth, I have had a rare congenital medical condition called hypothyroidism. Hypothyroidism occurs when the thyroid gland in the body produces less thyroid hormone than the body requires to function properly. Thus, I must take daily medication to help supplement my thyroid. My medical team has been wholeheartedly committed to keeping my thyroid levels on track, especially throughout the past couple of years, when it has been difficult. My levels haven't been as consistent lately, and sometimes, I'll feel the symptoms, which can include an imbalance of body temperature and sleep complications. I need blood draws periodically, and the staff members at Children's Mercy continue to be kind, patient, and fantastic.

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Through my leadership role in Interact Club, I began to realize that I had found an avenue in which I could achieve my goal of giving back. I immediately set to work creating, getting approval, and planning the Children's Mercy Toy Drive. I sent countless emails to my club sponsor, working out the finer details of the toy drive. My sponsor notes, "[REDACTED] was able to take feedback about processes and run with it. She designed an informational flyer, communicated with teachers, wrote announcements, checked in with classrooms, organized pick ups, and delivered the toys to the hospital. Her attention to detail and communication helped the toy drive run smoothly, and it was incredibly successful." My other sponsor, [REDACTED], elaborates, saying, "From getting the Toy Drive approved by administration, generating publicity, to placing and maintaining dozens of donation sites throughout the school, Adaley has been leading this drive every step of the way." The drive would occur during the first two and a half weeks of December. We would use donated brown paper bags to collect toys, and the winning homeroom would receive a donut party before winter break.

When the toy drive began in early December, I began to feel nervous. I had never done this before, and as far as I knew, no one had ever done anything like this before at my school. I had no idea how the students and staff would react, and if I would get any toys at all. I wondered if all of my long hours planning, creating flyers, and sending emails to teachers would be worth it. Halfway through the drive, I sent out an email to teachers, asking them to let me know if they wanted their toys to be collected because the bag they received was becoming full. I had some responses, which gave me a renewed sense of hope. As I was collecting, I realized how many toys I was receiving. It felt like my hard work and persistence were paying off, and my wish to help others was coming true.

At the end of the drive, I had received a total of 440 toys from my high school. I was overjoyed, as I didn't realize that it would be that successful. When I delivered them later that month, I imagined kids like me receiving these gifts and being thrilled. I've received toys like these before at Children's Mercy, and it felt amazing to know that I was able to bring joy to kids through the work I did. I remember looking forward to the end of my blood draws when I was younger, so I could get a toy from a cabinet or small chest. I imagined kids staying at the hospital through the holidays, knowing that they would have a small slice of normalcy amidst a trying time, and I felt like all of my efforts had been worth it.

Once all of the toys were donated, I remember sitting in my basement, all of the donated toys around me, and feeling emotional for several reasons. Several times, I doubted myself about actually pulling off something of this magnitude. I learned so much about myself through this process, including my relentless drive and determination. I've always been a quiet and shy person, so the confidence I gained enabled me to branch out and try new things. I was utterly shocked by the resounding support of my school and its students, and as I was looking through all of the toys, I realized that I can accomplish anything I put my mind to.

Through this process, I found myself eager to begin planning the toy drive for this year to make it even better than last year. I got approval from my school's administration again and began gathering the supplies. I expanded the publicity for the toy drive, but I had to adapt to new guidelines about advertising that had recently been put in place. When I met with one of our vice principals, he told me that I could no longer associate the toy drive with Interact Club, that it had to be advertised as a high school toy drive. I was absolutely crushed, as I wanted to involve Interact Club this year just as I had last year. All of my flyers and social media posts would have to be more generalized, and I could no longer receive as much help from my club sponsors. I

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decided to keep doing the toy drive, as it was something extremely personal to me, and I wanted to make sure that patients had toys during the holidays.

As I was collecting the donations for this year, I was worried whether anyone would donate anything due to the new restrictions. When I collected donations at the halfway point, I was surprised to find how many donations I was receiving. This year, I collected 200 donations for Children's Mercy. I was so proud of myself, as I had collected a total of 640 toy donations over both years of the toy drive. The Children's Mercy Toy Drive provided me with an opportunity to express my gratitude, experience planning a large-scale event, and resulted in a newfound confidence.

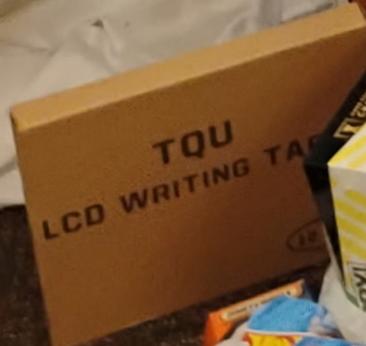


Children's Mercy  
KANSAS CITY

Children's Mercy  
KANSAS CITY

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Children's Mercy  
KANSAS CITY



## An Artist's Dream

Since the moment in which my hands grabbed a pencil and left a scribble on the wall, my brain got filled with a sensation of pleasure that left a mark on my heart and future. I could not help but get addicted to the lovely drug of art. I used to draw over graphic novels and then tried to make my own about how much I loved to tell stories through simple images. Art has been more than just a hobby. It has been a blanket for my cold and anxious days; a translator for when my words were not enough; a loyal companion that is always there for me. Hobbies can get boring in weeks or months, but I have never gotten bored of art, because it is my passion and love.

Several experiences throughout my life made me realize what I really want to be in the future. An artist. An artist who would connect with people. An artist who would share experiences in the disguise of fiction, so people would understand some situations. An artist who would evoke real emotions from even the most fake heart. I would like people to have a better understanding of different people's experiences or situations that are sometimes misunderstood. Situations that for some people are common and for others are a true nightmare.

When I came to this country and shared some of my and other people's experiences of my home country, Cuba, with several people, I was quite surprised by how many people lacked knowledge about the reality of Cuba and other Latin American countries. That made me comprehend why people are losing their empathy nowadays. Even though the internet facilitates us to get information about other countries, a lot of people do not have access to the internet; therefore, they cannot share their reality. In addition, some countries, like Cuba and North Korea,

have a strict government that, for the simple act of sharing their opinions, could even face death as their penalty.

Unfortunately, reaching and helping those people is not an easy task. To have access to certain areas of such countries requires a lot of money. Additionally, art supplies can cost a fortune. Markers, watercolors, brushes, and any other art supplies are tools artists have to buy in a short time period. Nowadays, digital art is the most used one due to its facility to share through the internet and its easy accessibility to all types of art tools. However, digital art tablets and certain art programs can cost a large amount of money. Moreover, a lot of talented artists cannot go to college or any art institution due to their economic situation.

Coming from a totally different country and starting everything from scratch was one of the most difficult challenges I had to deal with. Due to that drastic change, my economic situation became strict, limiting myself to have access to a lot of art materials and certain art classes/academies. For those reasons, I ask to please be considered for this scholarship, so I can start learning more about art, and eventually be able to share it through the internet and connect with more people.

## The Care Collective

There are many deserving organizations for the Kindness Project but one that is particularly important to me is the Young Women's Christian Organization. It's important to me because they have helped my family in times of need. This is a great way to give back to them and the community they serve. The YWCA is an organization that helps women and children in need. They provide clothes, shelter, toys, and many other things to the Saint Joseph community. The YWCA is also known for providing places to sleep if you are in a domestic violence situation. This includes emergency placements as well. I picked this organization because they provide safety to women in this community but also they have helped my family in situations when we needed it, it is only right that I give back to them. This is a way to show them what they do doesn't go unnoticed by the community and we appreciate all they do.

My way of giving back to them was to host a community hygiene drive called "The Care Collective." The drive took place for a week in January of 2026. Each day is a different item that was needed. On the first day there were different soaps like bodywash, shampoo, ect. I also collected items like blankets and toothpaste. A simple blanket can cause a woman to briefly forget or take their mind off of the situation they are in. To these women it's not "just a blanket" it is something they can call their "own" and maybe they have never had that sense of security. This project can change the lives of not only the school community but the women that receive these items. It makes them feel loved, seen, and even feel better in a time of need. Some women may have come from dangerous situations where they were told "you are less than". Well this drive will make them feel better about themselves or better about their situation.

My plan is to inspire either kids in the community to donate or even others outside of the school to consider donating their unused items instead of just throwing them away. This drive

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could influence others to donate to local shelters or even start their own drive over a topic they feel very passionately about. If I could get one person to donate then I would consider that a positive and it made a lasting impact.. It impacts me because I am the one starting the drive, collecting items, and I will be the one dropping the items off to the shelter. This makes the project more personal. The others impacted would be the women at the shelter receiving the items, the people donating their items or buying new ones to donate. The Care Collective will hopefully inspire others to organize a drive or just to simply donate instead of throwing out.

The community loved the idea and the drive. The YWCA was super appreciative of the different items donated. “I never imagined something as simple as soap could bring so much relief. Thank you for reminding us that we’re not forgotten.” To collect the items we had boxes that were decorated with different colored paper to attract people to inquire what they were for. The boxes were placed in high traffic areas around the school. We also posted flyers in medium to high traffic areas around the school and on social media. Posting on social media got people excited about donating and brought more items in. We not only collected items during the day but if people reached out and said they had items then we collected from them as well. This not only reached the target market in school but also branched it out to the community around the school. We collected around ten items in each category and we had six different days/categories. I feel like the drive went well but I would do a couple things differently. I would do a different theme instead of hygiene, I would do a toy drive before christmas or even a clothing drive. I feel like these themes would attract more people to donate. Even though there will be changes next time. I am most proud of the drive reaching out beyond the school community. At first I didn’t think it would, because it is a school focused activity. In the future I would like to expand it outside of our community and reach it to neighboring communities. These would include

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Savannah or the small rural communities. Next time we could pick an organization close to them or an event that took place in their community. It would also allow us to reach a larger target market.

Overall, The Care Collective was a success. We had large amounts donated, the YWCA loved the idea, the women felt better about the situation they were in, and the items went to a wonderful cause. This shows simple items that some people may take for granted can have a lasting impact or cause someone to have a better outlook on life.

# **“The Care Collective”**

**A hygiene drive for the YWCA**

**January 12th-19th**

**eliminating racism  
empowering women  
ywca**

**You can locate donation boxes in the main hall and the counseling center. They will also be collected in seminar.**

**Jensen Chambers & Rakiyah Graves  
jensenchambers@sjsd.k12.mo.us or  
rakiyahgraves@sjsd.k12.mo.us**

**In need of:**

**Towels, Toilet paper, hair ties, brushes, shampoo, conditioner, blankets, deodorant, razors, body wash, and toothpaste.**

**DONATE (Gently used items)**

**ANYTHING HELPS!**

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# 1st Day of the drive

January 12<sup>th</sup>

Item: Soap

Ex: Body wash, shampoo,  
conditioner

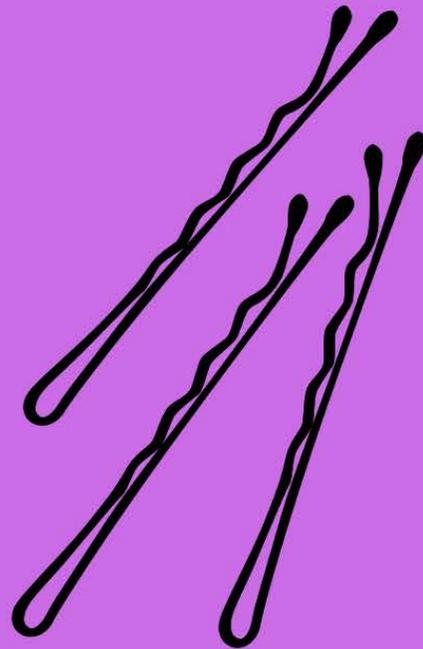


# 2nd day of the drive

January 13<sup>th</sup>

Item: Hair Care

Ex: Hairbrush, Hair ties,  
Hair clips, and Combs



# 3<sup>rd</sup> day of the drive

January 14<sup>th</sup>

Item: Toothbrush and  
Toothpaste



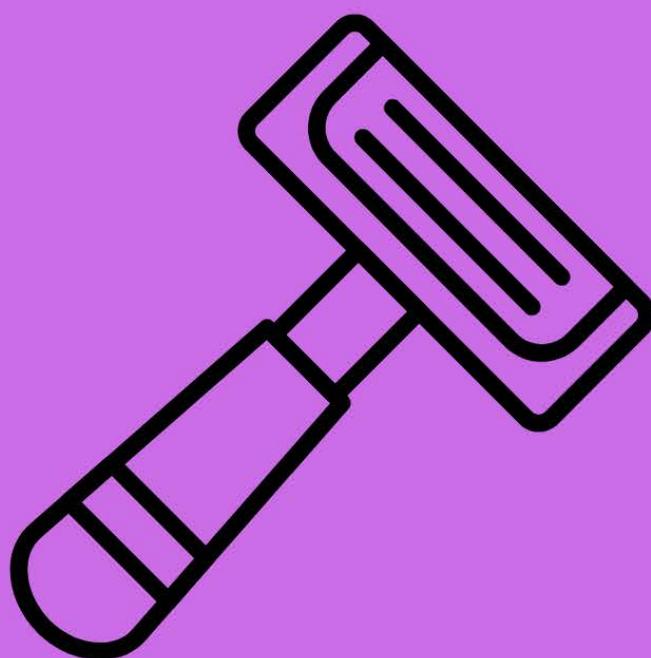
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# 4th day of the drive

January 15<sup>th</sup>

Item: Feminine Hygiene  
Products

Ex: Pads, Tampons,  
Deodorant, and Razors

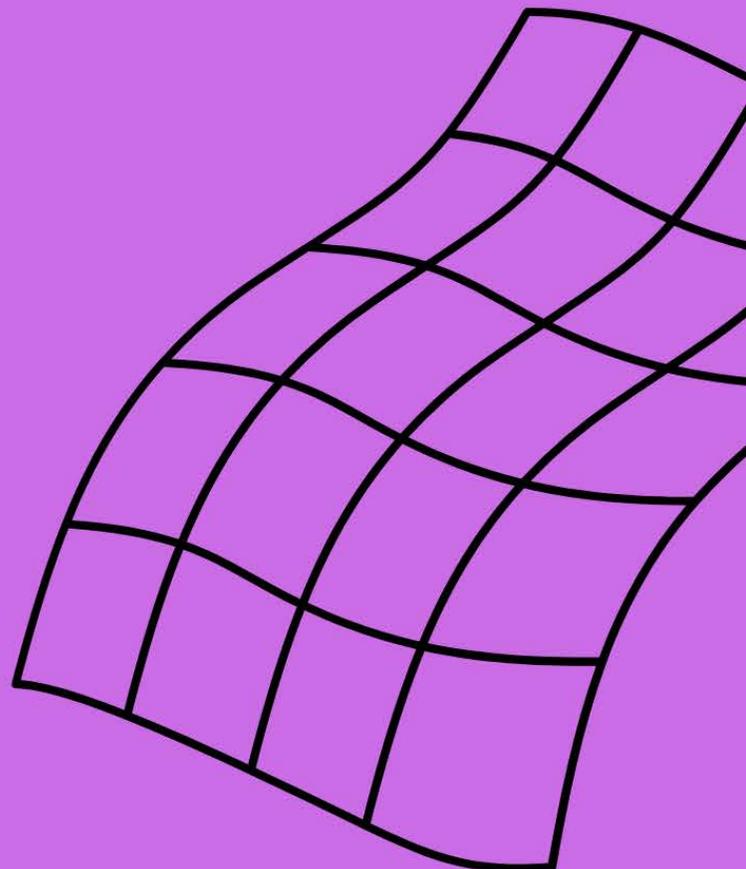
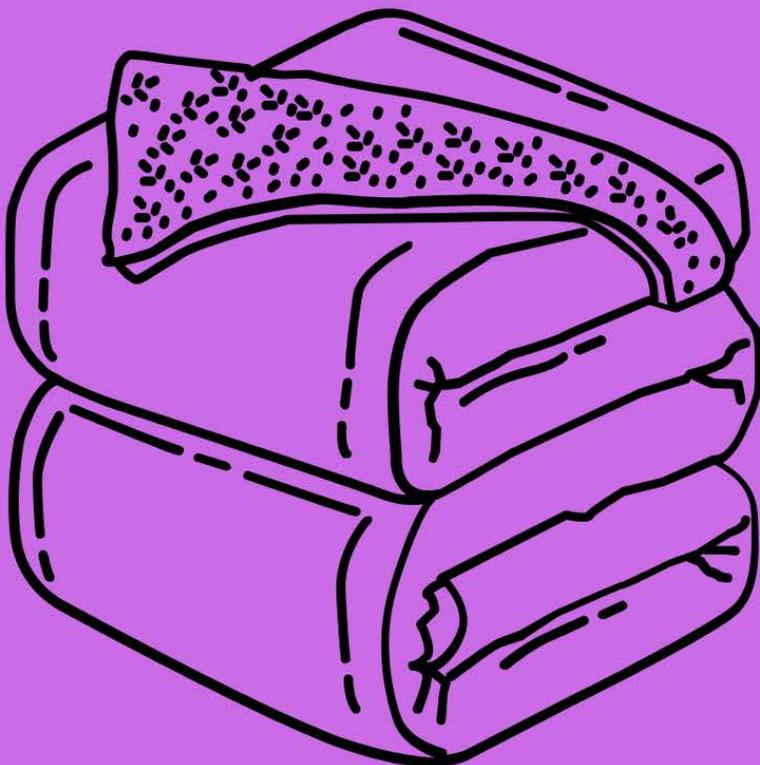


# 5<sup>th</sup> day of the drive

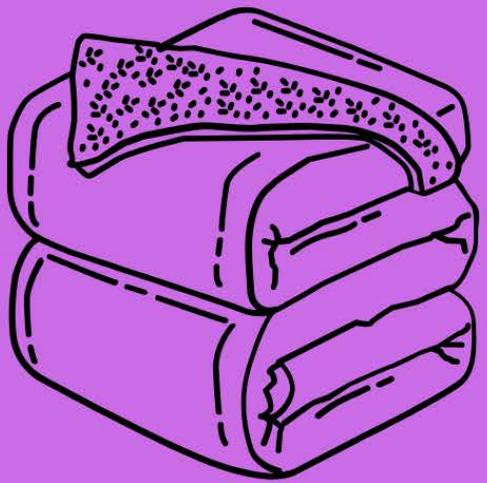
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January 16<sup>th</sup>

Item: Blankets



**Last Day of the Drive!**  
**Bring any of the items from**  
**the week. January 19<sup>th</sup>**



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## The Joy of Giving

Last holiday season, I stumbled upon the Salvation Army Angel Tree Program while scrolling through TikTok. The influencers sharing about the program and shopping for children sparked something in me, creating a desire to contribute to this program and help others within the community. This year, I decided it would be the year I contribute to that program and incorporate it into my kindness project. The Salvation Army's Angel Tree Program is where individuals select an “angel” from a Christmas tree, typically set up at local stores like Walmart. Each “angel” represents a child from a family that is unable to afford Christmas gifts (Salvation Army). Attached to the tree are tags that contain information about the child's biggest wish for the holiday season (Salvation Army).

By participating as an “angel shopper,” those who contribute spread joy by playing the role of Santa Claus and bringing the magic of Christmas to life for these children who would otherwise go without. With the current state of the economy, rising costs, and the modifications to assistance programs like SNAP, I realized more families than ever would struggle to provide gifts for their kids this Christmas. I wanted to bring joy into children's lives and help out their parents, who are doing their best, which is the main reason I made this my project.

Currently, I work as a cashier and a Christmas tree decorator, and since I paid off my car, I have some financial stability. Instead of spending money on myself buying clothes and fast food, which I do not need, I want to put money toward making a difference in one child's life. The thought of a kid lighting up over a gift motivated me to act on this. I remember when I was little and found the highlight of Christmas to be the gifts. I would wake up before the crack of dawn, ready to reveal what Santa had brought. As I got older, I started to understand the true

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meanings of Christmas, but looking back on all the excitement I had, I hope the child who receives the gift I give has those excited, festive feelings.

Going into this, I was unsure when Angel Trees are put up. Knowing that the Angel Tree program wraps up early to mid-December, I wanted to ensure I could pick an angel and hopefully shop for them before Thanksgiving. I began by researching when Angel Trees would start popping up in local stores. Google indicated that Walmart usually sets them up between the beginning and middle of November, so with my plan in mind, I grew determined to do this.

During the first week of November, I called several Walmart locations. Each time I was met with disappointment, I kept getting told that the angel trees were not yet out. Nevertheless, I remained hopeful and decided to give it another week before reaching out again. Unfortunately, when I called again, I received the same negative feedback. Still feeling determined, I turned to the Salvation Army's official website for answers. It stated that November 15th was the date when the drop-off bins would be available, so I assumed the trees would be set up around that time (Salvation Army).

As the weekend of November 15th approached, I found myself searching for an angel tree. I visited Walmart multiple times and even called some other nearby stores, but I had no luck. One employee I spoke with suggested that the trees might not be put up until after Thanksgiving, despite the indication from the Salvation Army website that they would be available earlier. Feeling a bit discouraged but not willing to give up, I decided to give it a day before continuing my search.

On Monday, November 17th, I made a call to the Walmart closest to my house. Unfortunately, my call went straight to voicemail. So, I once again decided to give it another day. Tuesday the 18th rolled around, and with anticipation, I called another Walmart location. Finally,

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I received the news I had been waiting to hear: An angel tree was indeed set up there! Full of excitement and determination, I jumped in the car and raced to the store.

As I walked through the store, I did not locate the angel tree immediately. After walking in the side entrance, I checked at the main entrance, and I did not see it. As I was ready to give up for the day, I spotted a tree out of the corner of my eye, which was right in front of the customer service desk. A wave of relief washed over me as I approached it, eager to select my angel.

After taking a moment to survey all the angels available, I decided to pick one at random. It belonged to a four-year-old girl who had wished for building blocks. As I was feeling the excitement of finally finding an angel tree, I began the search for building blocks.

Walking down the toy aisles, I realized there were many options for building blocks. There were plastic ones, wooden ones, large sets, and smaller sets. After careful consideration, I settled on a set that had the largest quantity of wooden blocks. I hoped that the durability of wood would last the girl a longer period of time. I made my way over to the checkout to purchase the building blocks.

Finally, I made my way to the Salvation Army drop-off bin. I attached the angel tag and placed the gift inside the bin. As I left the store, I realized that though I would never personally know the little girl, I knew I had made a difference in her life. Knowing that my act of kindness would bring a smile to her face filled my heart with joy.

In that moment, I felt a connection to something much bigger than myself. I realized that these kinds of acts of kindness create ripples, transforming not only the lives of those we help but also ourselves in the process. I hope that one day, when I have children of my own, I will be able to teach them the importance of giving back, just as I had the chance to do this year. The

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Christmas season truly embodies the spirit of generosity, and participating in such initiatives reminds us of the impact we can have on one another's lives.

My Source

*The Salvation Army.* [www.salvationarmyusa.org/angel-tree/](http://www.salvationarmyusa.org/angel-tree/).



ANGEL TREE

4 Year Old  
Girl  
Building Blocks

Take this tag, shop for  
item, buy at register,  
and drop in the  
Salvation Army  
bucket with this tag!

Thank you for  
your generosity!





Spark  
Create  
Imagine

WOODEN BLOCKS

M

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**4 Year Old  
Girl  
Building Blocks**

Take this tag, shop for  
item, buy at register,  
and drop in the  
Salvation Army  
bucket with this tag!

Thank you for  
your generosity!



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The wrestling room project

Being kind to people is one of the most important things you can do to any human being. Being kind isn't just doing above and beyond for every person you meet. It can simply be you holding the door open for someone or you just smiling at someone you walk by. Just even these small things can change the world with your kindness. The most important is for people to be kind to young children to have their understanding of growing up that people are kind and it's not okay to be rude to any other person. When you teach a child to be rude or that it is okay to be mean to other children, they will then grow up to think it is okay to treat others that way. I believe that to make a change in the world of kindness we must start at the children of our world.

My goal is to start with my [REDACTED] youth wrestling club. I teach these kids wrestling twice a week for three months long every year. I end up spending a lot of time with these kids and end up growing a personal connection with each of them. My project is to teach them that kindness matters. I want them to know that being kind to anyone they come across is more important than anything else. This means so much to me because I know from my experience that things kids say to you can hurt and it can stick with you for your whole life. I have been around these kids for four years now, so I believe I have built good connection and trust with them. I want to show kids that they can trust me and that I am there for them. I show that I will show up for them whether it is to their tournaments or to their birthday parties.

I want them to know they will always have someone who is there for them. I want them to know that there is someone out there that always believes in them no matter what. I do this because I

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know how much I needed it as kid. I believe I have made impacts on them because even just me talking to some kids about situations there having in school and how they might be able to handle it with kindness. there were even some situations when they would come back the next practice and tell me how much I helped them and how better their situations were. I believe that made a ripple effect because they would then tell me how they would help their friends by telling them the same things I told them. one of my best kids name [REDACTED] she came to me one day after telling me that someone was being mean to her and I told her that sometimes people have a lot going on behind doors and to just continue being her kind self. She came to me the next practice and told me she told her friend who was being mean “I am here for you” knowing she was only in fourth grade I was very proud of her. Because in that moment it felt like I was making an impact. Her dad then came to me after practice and told me how upset she was before and how he felt I really helped her.

Moments like that made me filled with joy because I wish I had someone to help me like that as a kid. I feel that is what powers me to continue to try and help these kids to make an impact. I remember being teased when I was young and not much older than what amelia was. I wanted to help her in ways I felt I didn't have then I could see myself in her and seeing the same pain she was struggling with. I try think about what I would've done then if I had the same mindset I have now. That is what I try to give as an example to the kids I want to show that kindness is always better. This project means so much to me because I never want anyone to feel as if they are alone in this world. I have been with these kids for four years, but I don't plan on that being the end of it. I want them to know I will always be someone who is there for them as long as they live. I want them to know it is always better to have kindness than being an ugly person.

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I want to show these kids that something good and kind out there exists that there isn't all bad in the world. That we can have a kind world if we really try to and that it is better when we all try and when we all give to others what we wish to receive. I want to make a difference in these kids because I know that is what I wanted when I was a kid. And I try to give to them a safe place like I always wanted. I want them to see that there is no good in treating someone for less than what they are. I want to make an impact with my project with not only the kids I see but for every other kid that comes across them. I wish for them all to make their own impacts on the world and not just to the people they see.

<https://sevendays.org/wp-content/uploads/wpforms/669-a015b4ef5ecdf8d337d92686f111d52b/0ACD0962-307E-47DB-8FDA-AB11CA20FC86-94d1158fddb0924d86a5bef2c5acfcf5.mp4>

