

# TUCSON GIVING

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 10, 2019 | PAGE A8

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## Nonprofits seek toys, gifts for children in need

By Loni Nannini

SPECIAL TO THE ARIZONA DAILY STAR

Shelves aren't the only place you'll find elves this holiday season: You can see them in action at local nonprofits gathering gifts for local foster children and staging toy drives for other children in need.

The crew at GAP Ministries is in high holiday gear with plans for Christmas visits for children in foster care and their families.

The annual holiday visits feature food, crafts, family photos and a "store" where parents can get free presents for their children who are under the care of the Arizona Department of Child Safety due to abuse, neglect or unsafe circumstances.

Following a wrapping party, the gifts are placed under a Christmas tree to provide "a mini-Christmas morning, if you will," said Beth Sierra, GAP Ministries' programs supervisor.

The event is designed to offer a positive holiday experience for the children with their families. Sierra said it also helps to keep families engaged in their children's lives when they are not living at home.

"Christmas is a hard time of year for parents whose kiddos aren't at home with them. Often they spend money they need to pay bills on toys — and some parents cancel visits to avoid seeing their children if they can't afford to buy them gifts — so we try to lessen that burden for them. We want to give them time that they can spend together without all the added stress," said Sierra.

Sierra said that since GAP Ministries began the tradition in 2015, more than 500 children have built happy holiday memories with parents and siblings.

GAP Ministries also makes an extra effort during the holiday season to support children who live in "SPLASH" — Spirit Powered Love Aggressively Shaping Hearts — Group Homes, which are built around the concept of family. Each "foster family" is comprised of a full-time houseparent couple and up to 10 foster children of varying ages; the homes and/or individual children can be "adopted" by individuals, groups,



PHOTOS PROVIDED BY GAP MINISTRIES

GAP Ministries is in the process of collecting toys for foster children. The toys are distributed through Christmas visits for children and their families that are designed to keep families engaged while they are living apart.



GAP Ministries says the Christmas visits have allowed more than 500 foster children to build happy holiday memories since they began in 2015.

churches or businesses during the holidays.

Sierra said each child makes a "wish list" for the holidays, and adoptees are asked to spend about \$75 to purchase items from the list.

"If some of the kiddos don't have families or their families can't afford any presents for them, these are the only gifts they receive," said Charlie Daniels, a foster family specialist and former houseparent in a SPLASH Group Home.

### MIRACLE EN EL BARRIO

Embracing community and inclusiveness is at the core of Miracle en el Barrio presented by NOVA Home Loans, which will celebrate 17 years of providing holiday cheer to children in South Tucson and their families on Friday, Dec. 20, at St. John's Church, 602 W. Ajo

Way.

About 50 NOVA employees spearhead the festivities and assist with toy drives, which seek to collect toys for at least 3,000 children. Since its inception, the event has given more than 38,000 toys to local children who would not otherwise receive gifts.

"NOVA has always been very committed to giving back to the community. Miracle en el Barrio was something that NOVA CEO John Volpe started back when he was a loan officer with his friend, Steve Nuñez," said Kathy Stern, education exchange manager with NOVA Home Loans. "They saw a need and wanted to do what they could to help out, which is typical of John and NOVA as a whole."

### TOYS FOR TOTS

Another toy drive reaching out to the public for assistance is Toys

### HOW TO HELP

#### Toy Drive for GAP Ministries

- **When:** 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. from Tuesday, Dec. 10, through Friday, Dec. 13.

- **Where:** GAP Ministries, 2861 N. Flowing Wells.

GAP Ministries is in need of donations of new, unwrapped toys, board games and gifts for children in foster care. The children are newborn to age 17; there is particular need for gifts for teenagers. If you want to help but don't like to shop, consider making a monetary donation online at [gapmin.com](http://gapmin.com), click on the "get involved" link (note "toys" in the comments section). For information or to volunteer to wrap gifts from 9:30 to 11:30 a.m. or 1:30 to 3:30 p.m. Thursday, Dec. 19, send an email to [beth@gampmin.com](mailto:beth@gampmin.com) or call 647-2569.

#### Fill the Wish Lists for Children & Teens in "SPLASH" Group Homes

- **When:** Through Friday, Dec. 13. GAP Ministries is seeking individuals, families, groups, businesses and service organizations who would like to help fill wish lists for children who live in group homes. Individual children or entire households can be "adopted" for about \$75 per child. To make a donation, visit [gapmin.com](http://gapmin.com) (Note "holiday" in the comments section).

For information, contact Dolly@[gampmin.com](mailto:gampmin.com) or call 647-2610.

#### Stuff the Big Red Bus for Miracle en el Barrio during the Fourth Avenue Street Fair

- **When:** 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Friday, Dec. 13 through Sunday, Dec. 15.

- **Where:** O'Malley's, 247 N. Fourth Ave.

Donations of new, unwrapped toys will be collected for the 17th Annual Miracle en el Barrio, which will take place from 8:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Friday, Dec. 20, at St. John's Church, 602 W. Ajo Way. The community Christmas party provides free toys and festivities for about 3,000 children in need in South Tucson. Toys or monetary contributions can also be dropped off from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. through Thursday, Dec. 19, at the following NOVA Home Loan locations: Corporate Center, 6245 E. Broadway, Suite 400; River Branch, 1650 E. River Road, Suite 108; Sunrise Branch, 3430 E. Sunrise Dr., Suite 150; Northwest Branch, 6893 N. Oracle Road, Suite 121. Monetary donation made payable to "Miracle en el Barrio" can also be sent to: NOVA Home Loans c/o Kathy Stern, 6245 E. Broadway, Suite 400, Tucson, AZ 85711

#### Marine Corps' Toys for Tots Tucson Holiday Toy Drive

- **When:** Donations of new, unwrapped toys are being accepted through Monday, Dec. 23, but are requested by Dec. 16

- **Where:** More than 100 locations in Pima and Santa Cruz counties, including many CubeSmart locations; Pep Boys Manny Moe and Jack stores; Bealls Outlets and more. Donations are also accepted at the Toys for Tots Warehouse, 3981 E. Grant Road. You can find donation sites or make an online donation to support the cause at [tucson-az.toysfortots.org](http://tucson-az.toysfortots.org)

Volunteers are also needed to help distribute toys to families at the toy distribution warehouse. For information, call 345-0954.

for Tots, which is run by the Marine Corps.

Cpl. Miguel Sandoval, Toys for Tots coordinator, said the effort, which has requests from almost 15,000 children ages newborn to 14, is in dire need of toys.

"Last year we collected about 24,000 toys and we are very low on donations this year. We have a lot of work to do if we are going to collect that many toys this year,"

said Sandoval, who hopes that a big push for awareness will result in a surge of donations.

"This is important. I know from the way I grew up that no kids deserve to go through the holidays without some type of presents or some type of holiday spirit," Sandoval said.

Contact freelance writer Loni Nannini at [ninch2@comcast.net](mailto:ninch2@comcast.net)

## Primavera to host memorial for homeless

ARIZONA DAILY STAR

The Primavera Foundation will hold its annual memorial service in remembrance of those who died this year while homeless.

The public is invited to the ceremony, which will be from 4 to 5:30 p.m. Thursday, Dec. 19, at Evergreen Cemetery. The event is held in the pauper's field on the west end of the cemetery.

The 2019 Homeless Memorial is designed to bring attention to the problem of homelessness in the community and to honor those who died this year while homeless.

"We will honor those who have died this year while experiencing



PRIMAVERA

The 2019 Homeless Memorial is designed to bring attention to the issue of homelessness in the community.

poverty and homelessness, and we will recognize that to prevent such

deaths in the future we must work to ensure everyone has access to safe, affordable housing, which is a basic human right," said Peggy Hutchison, CEO of the Primavera Foundation.

Primavera said people attending the ceremony can bring donations for winter survival kits that will be passed out to the homeless. The kits contain socks, winter hats, gloves, sunscreen, lip balm, snacks, water bottles and gift cards to restaurants or grocery stores.

The items can be brought to the ceremony or dropped off at Primavera's training center, 151 W. 40th St. Call 882-5383 for hours.

## TEP, Community Food Bank unite for energy-saving drive

ARIZONA DAILY STAR

Tucson Electric Power is teaming up with the Community Food Bank of Southern Arizona to provide energy-efficient lighting and faucet kits to low-income residents who qualify for food assistance.

Throughout December, residents who receive food assistance through the food bank will also receive a free energy-saving kit that includes eight LED light bulbs, a low-flow shower

head, bathroom and kitchen faucet aerators and an LED night light.

The kits, a \$40 value, can result in an annual energy savings of about \$75, the utility said in a news release.

TEP is providing the food bank with 11,000 of these kits, which will be distributed while supplies last at its distribution centers in Amado, Marana, Green Valley and Tucson, as well as at the Caridad Community Kitchen.

### NONPROFITS' WISH LIST

#### TUCSON YOUTH MUSIC CENTER, A PROGRAM OF THE SYMPHONY WOMEN'S ASSOCIATION

- **Mission:** The Youth Music Center offers weekly music instruction, with loaner instruments/music to underserved and at-risk children at no cost.
- **Wish List:** Musical instruments: violins, violas, flutes, clarinets, guitars, trumpets, electronic keyboards, Orff instruments; music

supplies: sturdy music stands, tuners, strings, metronomes, rosin, mouthpieces; office supplies, i.e., copier paper, three-hole folders and binders; in-kind catering services for receptions after student recitals; sponsor a student by donating to the TYMC Scholarship Fund; donations to building fund, or offering your expertise to help with the renovation.

- **Address:** 8 E. 15th St.,

Tucson, AZ 85701, 882-6653; [tucsonmusicsschool.org/tucson-youth-music-center/](http://tucsonmusicsschool.org/tucson-youth-music-center/)

#### SHYANN KINDNESS

- **Mission:** Put smiles on challenged children's faces by teaching kindness and anti-bullying and providing unexpected gifts.

- **Wish List:** New toys and games for all ages of children and teens; store gift cards so that teens can buy their own

clothing and toiletries; school supplies for all grades.

- **Address:** Donations can be dropped off at 120 S. Houghton Road, Suite 138-237; 449-3096; [www.Shyannkindness.org](http://www.Shyannkindness.org)

#### BIZELIFE

- **Mission:** Advances entrepreneurial mindset for all stages to start a business or profession & promote giving to those in need.

### WISH LIST

The Arizona Daily Star publishes a Community Wish List every Tuesday for nonprofits and hosts a website where nonprofits can post their needs year round.

Nonprofits registered as 501(c)(3) organizations are eligible to participate for free. Visit [www.wishlisthero.org](http://www.wishlisthero.org) to

register your organization.

Email [wishlist@tucson.com](mailto:wishlist@tucson.com) if you would like to find out how you can support organizations in our community or receive support for your organization.

Community Wish List is a collaboration of the Star and Heather Hiscox, founder of WishListHero.org.

- **Wish List:** New electric toothbrushes; donations; sturdy paper plates and utensils.

- **Address:** By appointment only for goods or services; 480-438-0047.

# POWERING HOLIDAY SPIRIT



From hanging Christmas lights in Winterhaven to delivering meals and donating bicycles for foster children, TEP employees embrace many opportunities to give back during the holidays. While we volunteer all year, December is a special time for our employees to hold food drives, collect toys, and support other efforts to spread goodwill across Southern Arizona. It's a great way to cap off another year spent improving the quality of life in the communities we serve.





## ARIZONA TAX CREDITS

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## St. Luke's Home helps seniors age in dignity

By Marie Reyna  
DEVELOPMENT DIRECTOR  
ST. LUKE'S HOME

- **What:** St. Luke's Home
- **Where:** 615 E. Adams St. Tucson, 85705
- **Phone:** 520-628-1512

St. Luke's Home has been offering compassionate service for 100 years in Tucson, with the past 40 years focused on elder care.

At St. Luke's Home, our mission is "to provide quality of life care for low-income seniors to age in dignity in an assisted living community." As part of the Eden Alternative registry, we offer programs and services in an aesthetically pleasing community to combat the three plagues of el-

ders: boredom, helplessness and loneliness.

We focus on elders unable to live alone, who fall into the economic "gap," meaning they are financially unable to pay for private assisted-living care but don't qualify for government programs and services.

Among our elders are the teachers who taught us; the artists who inspired us; the ministers who consoled us; the nurses who healed us; and the veterans who fought for our freedoms. All are contributing members of this community.

Our elders pay what they can to live here, but this payment does not cover the total cost of care.

We must raise funds for an average \$10,500 gap payment to ensure an elder receives what they need. We rely on compassionate heroes to save the day.

At St. Luke's Home, we believe all elders deserve quality, compassionate care 24/7, regardless of finances.

Sandra, a veteran of the Navy, arrived at St. Luke's from the VA Hospital in Tucson after a heart attack. She had been living in a small apartment in one of the toughest neighborhoods of Tucson. "It was a little hairy," she offered in her soft-spoken voice. "I had to walk anywhere I wanted to go. The only place to buy food was the 7-Eleven."

Sandra paused a moment and then added, more softly, "I was all alone, no friends, and my family lived far away. I kept falling, blacking out, and had to call an ambulance to get me to a hospital. I think some of my problem was stress. It was hard living alone in a bad part of town."

Sandra describes the reclusive component of aging, not by choice, but by circumstance. It is one of the commonly identified plagues of elders. She is not alone in this experience.

When the VA hospital helped Sandra find St. Luke's, her life turned around. "My health has improved, no more blacking out! It feels great to have people

checking in on me, and I love going to the birthday parties, Town Hall meetings and shopping every Wednesday," she said.

Sandra shared that she has not needed an ambulance or the emergency room since moving to St. Luke's. "My health has never been better," she said with a smile.

Your donation of \$100 provides an elder with 28 weeks of activities.

Your donation of \$400 provides an elder with nearly four weeks of full dietary services (food prep and serving) or the economic "gap" payment for an elder for nearly two weeks. Your donation of \$800 pays the economic "gap" payment for one elder for nearly a month.

## Imago Dei Middle School aims to beat poverty with education

By Cameron F. Taylor  
HEAD OF SCHOOL  
IMAGO DEI MIDDLE SCHOOL

- **What:** Imago Dei Middle School
- **Where:** 55 N. Sixth Ave., P.O. Box 3056, Tucson, 85702
- **Phone:** 520-882-4008
- **Website:** [imagodeischool.org](http://imagodeischool.org)

Imago Dei Middle School — a free private middle school in downtown Tucson for children from low-income families — has been transforming lives and making Southern Arizona a more stable and prosperous place since 2006.

The state tax credit contributions of our more than 1,000 individual supporters represent fully one-third of our operating budget, and allow us to give our scholars the support they need to close educational gaps and succeed.

Because most of our students are well below their grade level when they come to us, we provide a 10-to-1 student-teacher ratio and an extended school day, week and year.

We also furnish two meals a day, all materials, extensive enrichment activities, and continuing support through high school and beyond, all at no cost to qualifying families.

Our mission is breaking cycles of poverty through education, and what we do works. More than 90% of our older alumni have graduated high school on time and more than 85% have gone on to college, community college or job training.

Our sample size is still small — we have 162 graduates to date, all of whom we track through our Graduate Support Program — but a number of "our kids" have already established fulfilling careers and begun giving back to the school.

Their success is epitomized by Zahraa Kasimu, a member of our tiny first graduating class, who completed her bachelor's degree at the UA last year, exactly on time. She came to us as a gifted, eager-to-learn fifth grader who knew no English and whose schooling had been gravely disrupted when her family fled violence in Africa.



PRINCIPAL KITT BRET HART

Students at Imago Dei Middle School receive two meals a day, extensive enrichment activities, and continuing support through high school and beyond.

"Imago Dei was a turning point in my life," Zahraa says. "It instilled many of the values I live by and shaped who I am. And it has become a family tradition — my younger siblings all attend the school."

This spring, Zahraa married and moved to Kentucky, where she is pursuing a master's degree and certification as a mental health counselor. Three of her younger brothers currently attend Imago Dei.

Here's what your tax credit dollars can provide for an Imago Dei student or graduate:

- \$200 — a year of weekly art classes at the Tucson Museum of Art.
- \$400 — a Chromebook loaded with software for use in the classroom.
- \$1,000 — two meals a day for a year.



COURTESY ZAHRAA KASIMU

Zahraa Kasimu says "Imago Dei was a turning point in my life."

## End homelessness with aid from Our Family Services

By Sarah McNamara  
OUR FAMILY SERVICES

- **What:** Our Family Services
- **Where:** 2590 N. Alvernon Way, Tucson, 85712
- **Phone:** 520-323-1708
- **Website:** [ourfamilyservices.org](http://ourfamilyservices.org)

By the time Margarita was 18, she had lived in more than 60 foster and group homes. Over a decade earlier she and her younger siblings were removed from their parents, never to return.

She spent most of her childhood in survival mode moving from home to home and from school to school, eventually aging out of the system and into homelessness.

After the system failed Margarita, Our Family Services stepped in to help.

While homeless, Margarita was hesitant to count on anyone, but the street outreach team at Our Family Services slowly built a bridge of trust, giving her street survival supplies — water, food packs and personal-care items.

Eventually she took a leap of faith and entered one of its housing programs.

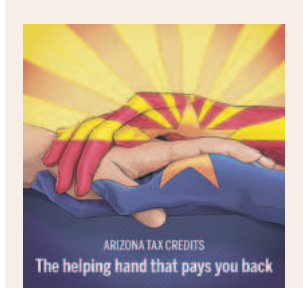
When recalling her first day in her own apartment, Margarita said, "It felt very unreal and very exciting, like everything was worth it. Nobody could kick me out, I had a spot that was my own."

When she and her boyfriend found out they were expecting a daughter, Our Family Services was there with parenting classes and specialized support for young couples.

Margarita's eyes filled with tears as she said, "When I first found out I was pregnant I thought I couldn't do it and would have to give up my baby for adoption. Our Family gave me the hope that I could become a mom."

Because of supporters like you, Margarita has broken the cycle, gaining skills and receiving wraparound support to build a brighter future for herself and her family.

There are thousands of



## SHARE YOUR STORY

The Star is asking organizations in Southern Arizona that are certified as a qualifying charitable organization or as a qualifying foster care charitable organization or qualifying school or program to share their story with Star readers. If your organization would like to participate, please email Debbie Kornmiller at [dkornmiller@tucson.com](mailto:dkornmiller@tucson.com) for details.



JESSICA CARABALLO

"Our Family gave me the hope that I could become a mom," says Margarita Sanriquez, pictured here with her oldest daughter in the backyard of their home.

young people just like Margarita who need your help.

A \$400 tax credit donation to Our Family Services can pay two months of utility bills for a family that would otherwise be out on the streets. An \$800 tax credit donation can cover move-in costs so a mother has a safe place to tuck her children in at night.

Your gift builds a path to empowerment and self-sufficiency for homeless families and youth right here in our community. Thank you for investing in the future of our most vulnerable neighbors.

The mission of Our Family Services is to end homelessness and strengthen our community.

## HOW IT WORKS

Arizona provides two separate non-refundable tax credits for individuals who make contributions to charitable organizations: qualifying charitable organizations and qualifying foster care charitable organizations. Tax credits are also available for donations to schools.

These tax credits are a way for Arizona taxpayers to direct their taxes to organizations and causes that are important to them.

Individuals making cash donations may claim donations as tax credits up to

the allowable amount on their Arizona Personal Income Tax returns.

Tax credits provide a dollar-for-dollar reduction of your Arizona income tax liability. This means that a \$400 tax credit saves you \$400 in taxes. On the other hand, tax deductions lower your taxable income and are equal to the percentage of your marginal tax bracket.

The allowable 2019 credit for contributions to qualifying charitable organizations is \$400 for single and head of household taxpayers and \$800 for

married taxpayers filing a joint return.

The allowable 2019 credit for contributions to qualifying foster care organizations is \$500 for single and head of household taxpayers and \$1,000 for married taxpayers filing a joint return.

For a list of qualifying organizations and more information on these or school tax credits, see [tucne.ws/taxcredits](http://tucne.ws/taxcredits) at the Arizona Department of Revenue website.

You can donate and claim the credit for 2019 up until April 15, 2020. For more details, consult your tax professional.



**Yes, It's True - You can pay less taxes and help your favorite charity!**

**In Arizona, you can choose where your money goes!**

For more information or to donate now, visit



**GiveLocal  
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Arizona Charitable Tax Credit Coalition