

OSF Mission of Giving Shines during Christmas

Nearly 600 presents donated to children by OSF Mission Partners in Rockford

Ask anybody who works for OSF HealthCare what they love most about it and they will gladly tell you it's our Mission of serving with the greatest care and love.

And while evidence of that can be found every day, it gets turned up a notch, or two during the holidays. That was displayed this week with the piles of brightly colored Christmas presents of all sizes that when out the doors of OSF HealthCare Saint Anthony Medical Center in Rockford.

Last week it was the nearly 400 gifts donated to the annual Salvation Army toy drive. This week 200 more presents are on their way to foster children in Winnebago and Boone Counties through the Adopt-an-Angel program.

"This is when the little kid in me comes out," says Christy Eldridge, Manager for Patient Experience and Volunteer Services at OSF HealthCare Saint Anthony Medical Center. "Because who doesn't get excited when you see a great big package that wrapped up with a beautiful bow. And I think the fun for us is that we get to recognize that these are for, you know, children in our area. They don't go somewhere else. They go to kid's right here in our community. And that just really makes us happy."

This is the 22nd year OSF employees, through the Mission Outreach program, have added a couple more names to their holiday shopping lists so that area foster children can have joyous Christmas. OSF is one of dozens of local companies and organizations that participate in the Foster Care Alliance program, this year resulting in nearly 3-thousand presents being donated. Foster Care Alliance Coordinator, Patti York, says the next step is for the seven different agencies they represent to sort and gather the gifts for their children.

"The case workers from the different agencies will come to the warehouse and they will pick up their caseload of kids gifts," says Patti York, Foster Care Alliance Coordinator. "And then, between now and Christmas, they will go out to the home and deliver them, so that they will have gifts under the tree for Christmas morning."

York says Adopt-an-Angel is especially important for foster children because they're separated from their biological families. This helps brighten their day during what can be a difficult time.

"This is probably the best part of my job - is when we get to do things through our Mission Outreach team," says Eldridge. "Because the idea that we're here to serve with the greatest care and love, it's not just between the walls of the medical center or within the doctor's offices. I mean, we are really here. We participate in things, you know, throughout the community. And so, this is part of doing our job."

The Adopt-an-Angel program allows employees to choose tags with the first name, gender and age of a foster child. The tag also includes a "wish list" of things the child would like to find under their Christmas tree. And while those lists include toys, most of the requests are for clothing and comfort items, like blankets and pillows.