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Editorial: Help us make a difference

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The Dispatch and The Rock Island Argus

Count us among those who groan to see Christmas decorations compete for space with witches and ghosts on store shelves. Ditto for TV commercials blaring holiday tunes long before we've decided on the Thanksgiving menu.

But we make no apologies for today's early plea for your support for our Dispatch Good Fellow Argus Santa Fund holiday giving programs. You see, raising the money necessary to make the holidays brighter for as many families and seniors in need as we possibly can takes much more than a couple of weeks in December.

This year, despite a persistently tough economy, our goal again is to raise \$40,000 to provide holiday gift certificates to families, children and elderly Quad-Citians. Each year, the fund also selects six or more needy families or individuals to receive major assistance. These are people who, through no fault of their own, are having a particularly tough time this year and have a critical need they can't afford. Your dollars and cents help provide vital medical equipment, beds for children who had been sleeping on the floor, stoves and auto and home repairs.

Last year, thanks to your generosity, we raised \$38,439, just short of the \$40,000 mark. We're confident that, with your help, in 2013, we can make it over the top. So please bear with us throughout the next few months as we remind you of the need and tell you about our progress from time-to-time.

"Our readers made it possible to help more than 1,000 children and about 500 adults last year," said Gerald J. Taylor, publisher of The Dispatch and The Rock Island Argus. "They were among our community's most needy and deserving residents. And we're grateful our donors made it possible for them to enjoy the holiday season."

We couldn't do it without partnering agencies Aldridge Early Learning Center, ARC of the Quad Cities, Bethany for Children & Families, Boys & Girls Clubs of Mississippi Valley, Child Abuse Council, Christian Friendliness, Illinois Division of Rehabilitation, In Touch Adult Day Services, Just Kids Early Learning Center, Martin Luther King Jr. Center, Project Now Rock Island County Senior Center and Skip-A-Long Child Development.

We're encouraged in our efforts by the gratitude of those who see firsthand what your kindness and

generosity buys.

Mary Ann McLeod, of Bethany for Children & Families, told us last year, "We love the Good Fellow Argus Santa program. We think it's wonderful. Without it, we know some of the people we serve wouldn't be able to provide for their families during the holidays, and there's nothing like seeing the joy on their faces when they get some help."

Amy Iams, of InTouch Adult Day Services, said some of the 60 adults you helped last year wept tears of joy when they received your gifts.

"They were overwhelmed that somebody cared so much," she said. "I heard so many of them say they didn't know they were going to get their medication, food and holiday items last month and called it a blessing that they wouldn't have to struggle as much after getting this help."

Tom Lowery told us the people you helped from the Illinois Division of Rehabilitation and ARC of the Quad-Cities Area "were so grateful that the Good Fellow and Argus Santa Fund came along. A couple of the grandmas said it was the only money they would get to use for presents for their grandchildren, and almost to a person, everyone said it helped them have a nice Christmas dinner."

We accept their gratitude on your behalf because it is you, our readers, who make it happen. Remember, too, that every dollar you give goes directly to the needy, not to the newspaper or the agencies' everyday expenses.

What your money buys are things such as food, clothing and other necessities and, of course, Christmas toys. The folks at Skip-a-Long told us that in addition to a toy they wanted, your help also bought their kids socks, shoes, underwear and clothes they needed.

"You'd be surprised by what a difference you can make in a child's life with a pair of socks and a "My Little Pony," a staffer who took part in last year's Skip-A-Long effort told us.

Help make a difference. There are four easy ways to give:

- Make a donation online at QCOnline.com/goodfellow
- Send a check to Good Fellow, c/o Dispatch/Argus, 1720 5th Ave., Moline, IL 61265
- Use the drop box in the Dispatch/Argus lobby, 1720 5th Ave, Moline
- Use the drive-through window at the circulation office at the corner of 6th Avenue and 18th Street in downtown Moline.

But however you choose to deliver it, before you begin planning this year's annual feast of bounty, take time to brighten the holidays of someone less fortunate.