



ANGEL TREE

“Every kid should experience the excitement behind opening up a present on Christmas Eve or Christmas morning, despite what circumstances they’re in.”

In 1979, in Lynchburg, Virginia, Captains Charles and Shirley White were divinely inspired. Knowing that many families in the community were struggling to make ends meet as Christmas approached, the Whites worked with a local shopping mall to help provide gifts for children in need. Each child was represented by a paper angel that had been cut from a Hallmark greeting card and hung on the mall’s Christmas tree. The back of each angel listed that child’s one “need” and one “want.”

Thanks to generous donors, that inaugural year of The Salvation Army “Angel Tree” helped make Christmas brighter for 462 children.

Now, 35 years later, the Angel Tree serves nearly a million children across the country every year.

“If Mom has to choose between paying a light bill and getting her kids Christmas gifts...that’s a really heartbreaking choice.”

Although the numbers have grown immensely, the core idea of the Angel Tree has remained. Generous donors “adopt” an angel from Christmas trees in malls and businesses throughout the country. And those donors then shop for Christmas “needs” and “wants,” returning the gifts to The Salvation Army for distribution.

For those children in need, the benefits are obvious. But the joy these acts of love provide is even more powerful for the parents. Instead of agonizing over the choice between buying gifts and putting food on the table, they are comforted and blessed by the kindness of strangers.

“They made it happen for my kids and for many other little kids too. I’m very grateful for them.”



It truly takes an Army to organize and implement the Angel Tree program every year. But thanks to Salvation Army employees, officers, and volunteers, the incredible generosity and enthusiasm of Angel Tree donors is passed directly and seamlessly to those in need. And when parents come to pick up their gifts, The Salvation Army is able to share the true Christmas story with them, offering them the greatest gift of all.

What began as a moment of inspiration back in 1979 is now a *movement* of inspiration. And the angels that hang from those thousands of Christmas trees every year don't just represent the children in need, they represent the generous individuals, families, and corporations who take the time to think of others, share their blessings, and actively participate in the joy of Christmas.

“If you have an opportunity to change somebody’s life, or at least bring joy to somebody else’s life...why wouldn’t you?”