

Project Self-Sufficiency's Season of Hope Toy Drive Frequently Asked Questions

What is the Season of Hope? Who does it benefit?



The Season of Hope is a toy drive specifically to collect toys for children and teens **who are living in Sussex and Northern Warren County**. Families do not have to be Project Self-Sufficiency participants to use the Toy Shop. They need only register by providing proof of residency, child custody, and financial need. **Many families in our community struggle to provide gifts for the holidays**. All kinds of families struggle with holiday expenses; not just single and teen parents, but working two-parent families, grandparents raising grandchildren and others.

Who runs the Season of Hope Toy Drive & Toy Shop?

Season of Hope is led by Project Self-Sufficiency with the support of **community partners**.

How many families does Season of Hope help?

Each year, approximately 2,500 **children and teens** receive toys through the Season of Hope Toy Shop.

How do families get toys through the Season of Hope Toy Shop?

Parents register in advance in person or over the phone. On a designated date, each family selects a set number of items per child at no cost (*this number is determined by how many children register and how many items we have in stock*). This toy shop is **unique** because parents get to have the experience of “shopping” for and selecting the gifts they want for their children. The toy shop is set up in a beautiful, welcoming atmosphere where parents are treated with dignity.

What is the Stuff the Stocking contest?

Preschools, elementary, middle and high schools are invited to participate in a friendly competition to collect toys for the Season of Hope Toy Drive. The school which collects the most toys gains ownership of the Stuff the Stocking trophy for one year, along with a monetary donation for their school activities fund. The second and third place schools also receive monetary contributions for their school activities fund. In 2022, 44 schools participated in the Stuff the Stocking contest.



Why do you need cash donations?

Cash and gift card donations are also greatly needed – these allow our volunteers to purchase items to supplement the Toy Shop inventory (*Example: A large percentage of donated toys are for young children, yet a high number of families register to shop for teens*).

Isn't there a better way to help these families than just giving them toys?

It's not just about the toys - it's what the toys represent. Having gifts to open on Christmas morning helps struggling and isolated families feel respected, cared for, and part of a community. It lets them know they are not forgotten. They *matter*. This can be the spark of hope to help a family keep moving forward on a rocky path to self-sufficiency, or for a scared and struggling individual to find the courage to reach out for help for the first time. The rest of the year at PSS is devoted to education, job training and family strengthening programs to help individuals build a foundation for long term success. For some, visiting the Toy Shop is the first step on this journey and may be the only way they get connected to the services they need.



Questions? Contact Project Self-Sufficiency at (973) 940-3500 or visit www.projectsselfsufficiency.org.