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I-CASH BrightStart529 IL ABLE

Treasurer's Note

December 24, 2024

Make the Holidays Brighter by Sharing

There is a lot of discussion about when it is appropriate to put up Christmas decorations. Should you wait until after Thanksgiving? Is the end of Halloween the new start of the season?

As a kid, Christmas started for me as soon as we received the Sears and JCPenney catalogs in the mail.

I would skip the clothing section, go straight to the toy pages, and start circling the ones that I wanted. Then, I would go back and try to prioritize them with a system of one, two, or three stars. Next, I would write them out on ruled paper along with catalog page numbers and present my wish list to Mom.



This Godzilla with the shooting st would have obviously received three stars in my rating system, based on my smile. Several years ago when my parents were cleaning out their basement, I rediscovered it with its st missing, just like in the picture.

That wouldn't be the end of it, though. I would keep flipping through the catalogs, salivating over what might be mine, and come back to Mom with edits as my tastes and dreams changed. (As a parent, I have discovered that kids' "favorites" can change frequently.)

Now that I'm older, I really think it is better to give than to receive. It is also interesting to see how technology has changed and how much savvy my daughter is.

We no longer have those large catalogs, but she has the entire internet to scour. She takes her time and makes a PowerPoint presentation. She even devotes slides to tell the story of why the gifts are important, how she could be asking for even more, and expresses gratitude for whatever she may receive. The requests also come with pictures and links to websites to make my job easier.



We started off the holiday season by taking my family to the Christkindlmarket. It's my new favorite way to kick off the Christmas season.

In the spirit of giving, I'd like to revert to my childhood tradition of making a list. This isn't a list of gifts for me, but requests for people who are inclined to do something for themselves and others:

- I would appreciate it if you were to check my I-CASH website to see if we are holding missing money that belongs to you.
While there, I would be very happy if you were to check the names of your friends and family too. If you find some, don't forget to hit the "share" button this holiday season.
If you find money and are feeling generous, it would bring a smile to my face if you were to make a contribution to a Bright Start 529 college savings account or an Illinois ABLE account.
It would also warm my heart if you were to donate to a charity. (For a list of suggestions, you could look at our list of Charitable Trust grant recipients that have been vetted by the independent Charitable Trust board).
You also could give yourself the gift of free personal finance tips at our Illinois Financial Wellness Hub.

However you celebrate these holidays, I wish you the best and hope that you consider how you can make them better for your family, friends, and neighbors as well.

Sincerely,
Michael

Support Your Favorite Charity



Last week, Treasurer Frerichs visited The Salvation Army Central Division and presented its leadership with a check for \$27,100 in unclaimed property. Needless to say, the check would not fit in its signature Red Kettle.

The Salvation Army is the largest non-governmental provider of social services in the world, and one of the most respected charities in the country. How do we know? When Gallup polled Americans about their favorite charity a few years ago, the pollsters could not believe the numbers. But a second poll proved it was correct. More than 90% of Americans held the Salvation Army in high regard and recognized it as their favorite charity.

However, not as many know everything that it does. The Salvation Army describes itself as "dedicated to doing the most good." It serves approximately 27 million people in 134 countries. It provides social service programs (i.e. shelter, food, utility assistance, Christmas gifts), case work and counseling, youth services, senior centers, veterans services, religious services, disaster response services, and more. Find more services here.

Christmas is THE LARGEST fundraising season of the year. The donations support services and programs all year long. In 2022:

- \$102,061,493 total Red Kettle dollars raised
2,204,924 people received holiday assistance
5,975,302 toy and gift donations

Recently when Treasurer Frerichs visited the Glen House Pantry, we learned that 1 in 8 Illinoisans face hunger. The Salvation Army addresses that daily. The Red Kettle donations help provide more than 55 million meals for the hungry and more than 10 million nights of shelter for the unhoused.

If you are still looking for a last minute holiday gift, consider making a donation to The Salvation Army or another charity whose work is appreciated by you or a loved one. You can also check I-Cash and see if you have any missing money that you might consider paying forward as a donation to your favorite local charity.



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