

## DARLENE HOFFERMAN AND THE MERTON GIVING TREE



### Giving Back For The Holidays

This holiday season, we're taking a break from our regular construction and home building news to share a few details about one of our favorite community organizations: the Merton Giving Tree.

If you raised a family in the Merton community, you probably know Darlene Hofferma. During her 28-year career with the Merton School District, Darlene provided CPR training for teachers and first aid treatment for students. Now retired from her career as a nurse, Darlene still continues to give back to the Merton community through the Giving Tree program.

### Helping Out Those In Need

Working in the health room brought Darlene in contact with students from all walks of life. It wasn't too long before she learned which families were in need of assistance. Sometimes these children had an ill family member or a parent who was out of work.

Darlene had previously worked with the Merton Athletic Association for years, coordinating a candy bar fundraiser to help raise money for local kids in need. This fundraiser gave the kids something constructive to work on throughout the summer, teaching them good work ethic and helping keep them out of trouble.

Many of these kids never had the opportunity to receive Christmas gifts due to their economic situation, so Darlene took it upon herself to put together a fundraiser to help provide each child with a present for the holidays. This need laid the groundwork for the Merton Giving Tree program.



## How the Giving Tree Works

Through her connections with the Merton School District, ongoing participation in local food drive programs, or referrals from relatives and friends, Darlene and other volunteers typically help support 50-60 families each year through the Giving Trees.

Each family member provides a list of clothing items needed, as well as one toy for each child. Information regarding age, size, and gender of each child is printed out on tags that are attached to one of two trees (one tree is located in the Merton Primary School, the other at the Intermediate School). Members from the community select a tag from the tree, collect the gifts, and deliver them to the Giving Tree locations.

## Who Can Participate in the Giving Tree Program?

Charitable contributions are provided by people throughout the Merton area and donations are accepted by individuals and area church groups. As one of many local businesses that contribute gifts to the Merton Giving Tree on an annual basis, we have been touched by how this program has continued to grow stronger through the years, leveraging other organizations throughout the area to help spread its message of giving.

One of Darlene's favorite organizations to partner with is Merton's local Cub Scout pack. The Giving Tree offers scouts a unique opportunity to learn that helping people is important, providing them with good character-building experience that they can carry with them throughout their lives.

## What Kind of Gifts Are Most Popular?

Disney items are always popular with Giving Tree recipients, although the themes tend to vary from year to year. Last year, Frozen items were a big hit but The Avengers and other superhero-themed items seem to take top billing in 2019. The younger gift recipients always enjoy items like toy cars and trucks. These toys typically feature a price tag of \$20 or less, but donations of any value are welcome.

## When Do Giving Tree Gifts Need to Be Submitted?

Darlene asked that any gifts be delivered to either Giving Tree location by December 13th this year. Giving Trees can be found at both of the below addresses:

### Merton Primary School:

N68 W28460 Sussex Rd. Merton, WI 53056

### Merton Intermediate School:

N68 W28320 Sussex Rd. Merton, WI 53056