



Holiday for Hope

19TH Annual

Dreams for Kids

Holiday Celebration

Where did it all Begin?

In 1989, a small group of volunteers organized the first official event for Dreams for Kids. News came to us that Ms. Clara Kirk had recently founded a shelter for homeless children and their mothers in the West Englewood neighborhood of Chicago, one of the poorest neighborhoods in the country.

That year, on December 24th, we visited Clara and surprised her and the 52 children with a visit from Santa Claus and a Christmas full of food, song, smiles and gifts. As we were leaving, Clara cast a serious look and told us something we will never forget, "I am not sure if you really understand...if you had not come, these kids would not have even known it was Christmas."



Clara's words inspired us to continue our mission and do more the next year. Each year our holiday party grew to include more kids who would be denied the spirit of the Season. Now the annual Dreams for Kids Holiday Celebration in Illinois brings over 1,200 homeless and underprivileged children to the largest party of its kind in the state and they are treated to a day filled with joy and hope.

The United States Marines and the local community contribute over 3,000 gifts and food. A full Marine Honor Guard joins with 150 passionate volunteers to greet the kids at the door of a spectacular children's facility as they enter a Winter Wonderland complete with interactive games, crafts, clowns, face painters and memories to last a lifetime.

"The life I touch for good or ill, will touch another life and then in turn, another, until who knows when the trembling will stop or in what far place my touch will be felt."

~ Frederick Buechner



As Dreams for Kids began its global expansion, our traditional holiday celebration took on an even deeper meaning. Embracing the traditions of a world community brought home the historical significance of the Season.

Throughout human history, people from every corner of the world have observed the seasonal milestone of the Winter Solstice and created spiritual and cultural traditions to celebrate the rebirth of sunlight after the darkest period of the year.

The Winter Solstice is considered a sacred time in the yearly cycle of life. It is when the sun is at its lowest and weakest and from this day the light will grow stronger and brighter. The Romans called it the birthday of the unconquered sun.

This traditional holiday season can indeed be a very dark time for those in need. Dreams for Kids will continue to bring the light of hope to children who suffer from the most desperate of situations. Now we reach out to others around the world to join us on this day for a global celebration of generosity.

Please join us on the day of the Winter Solstice, December 22nd 2007, as we bring homeless and underprivileged children together to celebrate life, hope and the rising of the sun.

Let us come together, people of all faith and from every culture, to honor and celebrate children of all abilities and give each of them every reason to believe their future will be bright.

This year we will be joined by groups in communities all over the world. At one time, in all places, this collective energy will give unprecedented hope to the children of the world who are in the most need.

In each community, groups will plan an event for December 22, 2007, as simple as a visit to a homeless shelter or as grand as our traditional celebration held each year for homeless and underprivileged children in Illinois. You can join an existing event to be held in the cities listed on the global map on our website, <http://www.dreamsforkids.org/public/107.cfm> or you can start planning your own outreach.

Let's fill up the map with celebrations of hope in every corner of the world!





What is Dreams for Kids?

Dreams for Kids has been Changing Lives...One Kid at a Time since 1989.

Our mission is to empower young people of all abilities through dynamic leadership programs and life-changing activities that inspire them to fearlessly pursue their dreams and compassionately change the world.

Our organization was founded by [Tom Tuohy](#), at the request of his mother, [Patricia Tuohy](#). Mrs. Tuohy was a single parent who dedicated her life to raising her four young children and to overcoming any adversity that would stand in the way of their personal welfare and path to independence.

Having given her children the opportunity to achieve their dreams, with one simple request Mrs. Tuohy would create a legacy of dreams come true for future generations of children searching for hope. Today this legacy thrives in Dreams for Kids programs and events in communities across the United States and around the world.

Holiday for Hope

A worldwide event, the Dreams for Kids Holiday Celebration is hosted in 6 countries and the majority of states in America. On one day in December, homeless and underprivileged kids of all abilities are given a special day of giving and lasting hope.

Extreme Recess!

In 1996, Dreams for Kids was introduced to the world of those with physical and developmental challenges and we soon found out how isolated that world could be. Thus began our program of life changing activities, [Extreme Recess!](#), which brings children from the sidelines of life and gives them the opportunity to be a star.

For the first time in many of their lives, children are given the opportunity to participate in activities which include: basketball, baseball, soccer, sled hockey, water and snow skiing, kayaking, rock climbing, hand cycling, horseback riding, scuba diving, and sailing.

Dream Leaders

Our youth leadership program brings young people of all abilities, from every race, color, social status and religion and gives them the opportunity to see past any perceived differences, and the opportunity to recognize and appreciate our common humanity.

Dreams for Kids is working in schools and youth organizations, in partnership with government and social agencies, to reinforce the lessons learned from the classroom, build leadership skills, and serve the local and world communities. In 19 years, Dreams for Kids has impacted the lives of over 25,000 children.





Why participate in the Dreams for Kids Holiday Celebration?

The current level of poverty and homelessness among children worldwide is unprecedented. According to the National Center for Children in Poverty, 39 % of the children in the United States live in low income families. Around the world, 600 million children live in poverty.

Did you know?

- According to UNICEF, 100 million children live on the streets of the world.
- 1.2 million American children are homeless.
- 6 out of every 10 people living on the street are under the age of 18.
- 600,000 families in the United States will experience homelessness this year.

It is not someone else's problem

There are staggering numbers of homeless children in every country in the world. Our future will be in our children's hands. Today, as a group, children suffer more than any time in history. According to the USDA, 35 million Americans go hungry every single day, including over 12 million children. In the world, 854 million are hungry and 16,000 children die of hunger related causes every day – one child every five seconds.

Being Homeless Wounds Young Children

According to the National Center on Family Homelessness, every day homeless children are confronted with stressful, often traumatic events. Within a single year:

- 97% of homeless children move, many up to three times.
- More than 30% are evicted from their housing.
- 22% are separated from their family, put in foster care or sent to live with a relative.
- 74% of homeless children worry they will have no place to live.
- 58% worry they will have no place to sleep.
- 87% worry that something bad will happen to their family.



How can a single event make a difference?

Hope.

A life can be changed with the gift of hope. A child can be reassured someone cares. A single person can make a difference. A large group, working as one, can change the world. Each year a statement can be made and more can be inspired to be part of the change.

A single day can grow to a lifetime commitment. Organizations can be developed. Movements can begin. A global difference can happen. It happened just that way for Dreams for Kids.



Who can Participate?

Every single person can make a difference. This is the perfect opportunity to bring your friends and family together and reach out to those less fortunate in your community.

You can join an existing group in your area, or you can plan your own event. You can volunteer for the day or be involved in preparing to make it possible. If your time is limited, your financial support can make all the difference.

We welcome school groups, community organizations, local businesses and charities. This will be a day which will bring us all together for a common purpose and a message of hope.

This will be our Holiday for Hope!





How Do I Become Involved?

- Step One.....**Build your Team**
- Step Two.....**Hold a Meeting**
- Step Three.....**Choose your Guests**
- Step Four.....**Pick your Place**
- Step Five.....**Plan your Fund and Gift Drives**
- Step Six.....**Plan your Activities**
- Step Seven.....**Get the Word Out**
- Step Eight.....**Plan your Post Event Party**
- Step Nine.....**Give us a Review**



Step One: **Build Your Team**

It is very important to assemble a team who will support your efforts. It also brings more people to the mission. Make sure every person gives you a realistic assessment of how they can contribute. It is always best to be clear up front about the expectations and work involved.

Seek a great diversity of people for your planning committee. A diverse group makes for a great party. How large of a party do you wish to have? For small events, it is best to plan on one volunteer for every 5 guests. Do to the activities of larger events; the children will be occupied, so plan on one volunteer for every 10 guests.

Step Two: **Hold a Meeting**

Organization is critical! One person is assigned to be the leader. You know who that is.

- Print an agenda. The first meeting is to determine the type of event you wish to host, and the clear responsibilities of each person on the planning committee. A chair person must be assigned to each activity you bring to the party. The appropriate number of volunteers must be assigned to each activity.
- Discuss the history of Dreams for Kids and the importance of this event for children in need. Inspire everyone with the proof of what kind of difference they will be making.
- Brainstorm. Welcome everyone's ideas! Harness the passion of the room. As each person becomes empowered, so too will they transfer that energy to your volunteers and sponsors.
- Network. Make sure each person has the opportunity to list and then reach out to their contacts. You will need those who can raise funds as well as those who can recruit committed volunteers

Have fun! Set the tone now. This is going to be a great day. When you have a great time, the kids will have a great time.

Step Three: **Choose your Guests**

It all begins here. Where will you visit on our big day? Will it be a single homeless shelter? Will you visit several in one day? Will you bring the kids to one location and plan a bigger party?

Decide how many kids you wish to serve and the gifts, activities, food, and volunteers will be next.

If you will visit a shelter - confirm the day, time and activities of your event with that facility well in advance of the event day, at least by November 1st.

If you will be bringing children to a venue, make sure you send the attached confirmation letter to all shelters and or organizations by October 21, to be returned to you by November 15th, so that you can plan your activities and gifts. Ask whether transportation (busses, act) will be an issue and plan accordingly.

Age, gender, and name are important for all kids! Plan on hosting parents, caregivers, and staff.





Don't forget children with disabilities!

Reach out to agencies that assist those with physical and developmental challenges. Consider local rehabilitation centers, state and local government operated facilities, autism centers, your local Easter Seals, Spina Bifida associations and organizations for the blind.

See below to find out how to use Good Search, to assist you in locating children and organizations.

Step Four: **Pick your Place**

Once you have decided on the size of your event, choose your shelter, youth agency or venue to hold your event.

Make certain your venue is accessible for those with disabilities.

If you are unfamiliar with shelters or agencies in your area ask around – unfortunately there are many. A great tool is that trusty search engine. You can help the cause if you choose to use Good Search, a fantastic search engine, powered by Yahoo, which donates 50% of all revenue to charities. Every time you search, your chosen charity will receive a penny. This really adds up and we hope you choose Dreams for Kids!

You can make Good Search your regular search engine by visiting www.goodsearch.com and choosing Dreams for Kids as your charity. It just takes a minute and every time you search in the future, the programs of Dreams for Kids will benefit.

Step Five: **Plan your Fund and Gift Drives**

Once you determine the number of guests you will host, figure 3 gifts per child- not including the candy, coloring books, and other surprises! Remember the moms. If you are visiting a shelter, the gift of winter gloves and cologne will be greatly appreciated.

Carefully plan on sufficient funds for the feeding of all your guests – then add extra food. If you are visiting a shelter, plan on bringing the type of food you would cook for the holidays and bring some extra non perishable food. Don't forget dessert!

If your event is at venue, will you use a caterer, or will you bring food to cook? Make sure the chef knows how many kids, adults, caregivers, and volunteers are coming – then add more. This is a very hungry guest list. Remember to send home all leftover food with your guests.





For gifts:

- Ask everyone's contacts to contribute. People welcome the opportunity to buy a gift for a child.
- If your event is small, go shopping with your team. Have fun picking out toys for the kids and gifts for the moms. Don't forget to ask the store to contribute to the cause.
- For larger events, ask your friends to have their holiday house party guests bring a gift. People love this. Do a gift drive at work. Make a colorful box to put in the lobby so everyone can see it. Got to public places where you are a regular and ask them to sponsor a gift day. Or go to a new place and become a regular once they join the team!
- Contact your local Toys for Tots. There has been no greater friend for us in Illinois. You can get on their list for toys.
- Host a wrap party. Meet at one of your sponsor's places, a local union or VFW Hall, or one of your homes. For most parties, it is best not to "wrap" your gifts. We know, people love to wrap gifts – but it causes difficulty at the party. Instead have shopping bags donated or order some with colors of the season. This is best because guests often change at the last minute or are more or less mature for the gift than you had anticipated. To be able to look into the bag and choose for each child in attendance is invaluable. Try www.uline.com for great prices on bags. Label the bags by gender and age group.
- You can often get candy donated by local stores owners. If your party is large, try www.metrocandy.com for great bulk rates.
- Make certain you have storage and transportation vehicles for all your gifts and decorations.



For funds:

- Not everyone can commit to shopping or may not be able to make the event. Their financial contribution makes them an important part of the day. You will need funds to make the day a party to remember for the kids. Be sure to send requests to everyone's list. Give them a chance to be involved in the way which works best for them.
- Plan a pre event party at a local establishment. This will help raise awareness, raise funds, and give every guest an opportunity to also bring a gift. This is the opportunity to get everyone excited about the event of the year!
- Be sure to tell everyone at work. Don't forget your employer. Many companies have matching funds. Send out a memo.
- If you are not a 501 (c) (3) organization, Dreams for Kids will provide a tax letter to all contributors or in-kind donors in the United States, who contribute more than a value \$25. Be sure to get their permission and forward their contact information to us. We will take care of the rest.



Step Six: **Plan your Activities**

"Our kids will talk about this day for years." Those were Clara's Kirks words as she looked out at the kids from her shelter having the time of their lives at a recent Dreams for Kids Holiday Celebration. This is what you are aiming for.

Our motto has always been to treat every person as if they are a guest in our own home. Many of your guests will not have a home to return to. Welcome them into your hearts, and give them the gift of hope.

This is their special day. Give the children a day to be themselves and have a blast! Give their parents and caregivers a day to forget their concerns and see their children smile.

- For small parties, check if the shelter has a recreational room. If so, bring gingerbread cookies to decorate. One of our most popular and long standing traditions is the making of crafts. Bring pages of coloring books and go to a craft store to buy all the glue and glitter you need. Buy small craft projects for the kids to work on.
- For larger parties, set up large tables for the crafts and enough volunteers. The kids will be lining up! Contact local face painters or artists schools. Face painting is a big hit!
- Hire a clown, or contact a local theatre or school. Kids love clowns who make balloons.
- Survey the room and see what can be set up. A small basketball stand with a Nerf ball will draw a crowd. Bean bag toss is an easy set up and fun.
 - If you have a venue for your party, be sure to decorate the room. The kids eyes will light up the minute they walk in the room. The entrance can be turned into a Winter Wonderland.
- If your custom calls for Santa Claus, don't forget to find the right one. Everyone knows a jovial friend who doesn't need a pillow!
- For large events, contact a local school and have the choir sing as the kids enter the party and then stay around for some more song throughout the day. A special tradition which began at our very first event in 1989 is this: at the appointed time, have all the kids sing Jingle Bells. Loud enough for Santa to hear – and maybe he will stop by!
- Santa or your own gift giving tradition should always be last. After lunch, games and crafts, the kids will be worn out. It is much more manageable for the kids to take their toys with them. Picture your living room floor after the gifts are open – multiply this scene times the number of your guests!





Step Seven: **Get the Word Out**

"I never heard about this."

You don't want to hear those words after your event. Give everyone a chance to make a difference. Make posters and flyers. Everyone do a mailing to their own personal contact lists. Put it in the company newsletter. Post it in the lunchroom.

Work with the media. Dreams for Kids can help you with press releases. There is a sample for you in this packet. This gives your community the opportunity to be inspired and motivates more people to reach out to others. A single effort can become part of a movement.

Step Eight: **Plan your Post Event Party**

Your guests were up at dawn and have worked hard. Your committee put in months of planning and effort. Celebrate! Plan to stop at a local establishment for food, refreshments and to share your stories of one special day.

Step Nine: **Give us a Review**

Contact Dreams for Kids at 155 N Michigan Ave, Suite 700, Chicago, Illinois, 60610, 1-866-729-5454, fax 312-729-5401 or email info@dreamsforkids.org

Please complete the attached form and return to us. What worked? What did not work? Post event evaluation is important so that next year's event is even better! It is best to do this right away, while the details are easy to remember.





Helpful Tips

Have you remembered everything? Will the party come together as planned? There will always be unexpected developments, but if you cover your checklist and do your best, you are guaranteed a successful event that will be the highpoint of the holiday season.

Here are some additional tips:

- Name tags. Great for volunteers, even better for the kids. Kids feel special when you know their name, and you become real to them when they know yours.
- Wrist bands. Important for the kids at large parties. This makes it easy to keep track of their trip to Santa. Once they receive their bag of gifts, you can remove the band.
- Ask you volunteers to wear the colors of the season and of your customs. We save the jeans for cleanup and dress nice for the kids.
- If this is your custom, buy Santa Hats for all the volunteers. It adds to the effect and the kids can easily locate volunteers. They are inexpensive and are available at craft shops or Walgreens.
- Digital Camera! We are sharing photos from all Dreams for Kids Holiday for Hope Celebrations around the world. Be sure to send them to us at info@dreamsforkids.org . It is best to assign one or more people to this sole responsibility.
- Liability Insurance. Contact Dreams for Kids to ensure all your activities are covered under our policies.
- Consider a prize and a 'split the pot' raffle at your fundraiser. Check with local regulations. Dreams for Kids can help you with this.
- Remember to get detailed contact information on all your volunteers, including address, email and phone. It is important to send everyone a thank you letter (we can send one from Dreams for Kids, if you let us know all donor contact information.) It also makes it easier planning next year's event!
- Remember to send Dreams for Kids all contact information for contributions and in kind donations greater than \$25, so that we can send them a letter to use for their tax returns for all US events.
- Keep detailed records of all financial transactions and donations. Accountability to donors for their generosity is extremely important. Any excess funds can be donated to Dreams for Kids to be deposited into our Holiday for Hope account and to be used for next year's celebrations. Your donor list should be informed of the complete use of their funds.

