



FAQs for Holiday Help

We get a lot of requests to help around the holidays. Use this list of FAQs to help maximize your impact!

1. I want children to not miss out on gifts this year. Can I adopt a family staying at UMD's shelter?

While UMD only has 9 families staying with us at any given time, we no longer encourage adoption of families at the holidays. Best practice is to give adults in families the dignity to be part of the gift selection process. We now host a toy shop for parents to pick out gifts for kids. Please use the list to help provide gifts for the toy shop.

2. Why is there such a large number of gifts for adults? Shouldn't resources be focused on children?

Being homeless for the holidays is not fun for anyone—adults included. Many of our residents have not had a memorable childhood, and reinvigorating joy into their adult lives can be an important force for hope and new beginnings. All gifts on our list are small practical items that are needed or requested by our clients. We can't wait to share with you stories of how special these gifts make them feel each year. Stay tuned to social media in December when we report on the holiday party and gift giveaway.

3. It's not on the list, but I really want to donate _____ for the holidays.

While our donors and partners often come up with really creative and thoughtful donations, it's really important to stick to our stated needs. The holidays prompt a special desire to give, but sometimes well intentioned gifts can have some unintended consequences for clients or for UMD staff. Some gifts may not be the best fit for a person who is experiencing homelessness. Certain gifts can *increase* rather than decrease a client's vulnerability (risk of robbery of goods or breaking rules which can forfeit a person's housing or an item which can trigger mental health or addiction concerns). It's also important that we are fair to everyone and that all of our clients have the same access to goodies that come through our door without causing unnecessary disagreements. At UMD we (really!) wish we had superpowers to be able to follow up with everyone's hopes and dreams (donors and clients alike), but we are limited by time, staffing, resources, and storage. Trust us, you are making a *huge* impact by working hard to help us knock out our wish lists!



4. It's really important to me to help people in need when I encounter them. Can I give out items in the parking lot or at meal times?

Giving to people in need is important to us too. It really does pull at the heart strings to witness someone experiencing homelessness or when a homeless person asks for something we have. It's hard, but please do not give out items on UMD's campus. Doing so could put you, UMD staff (or the person you intend to help) in an unintended vulnerable situation. Giving items directly to UMD to distribute will help prevent these unintended consequences.

5. I work or have a packed schedule. How can I get donation items to you?

You can drop off donations Monday-Friday from 10am-5:30pm and Saturdays from 10:30am-1:30pm. If you are struggling to get your items to UMD during these times, please contact Viki Baker or a member of her staff to schedule a time a drop-off time or procedure.

6. My family is coming to town or a group I'm associated with wants to volunteer to do something special for the holidays. How do I do that?

We have a lot of requests, especially around the holidays. It's really important to us to brainstorm with community members on how to best serve our clients. Generally we are able to accommodate most requests for group volunteer projects, but it is best to contact us well in advance (1-2 months) to start working together to think about a volunteer project. We know that from your end that that may be a difficult window to meet, but it's the best way that we can make sure that our staff can meet your needs along with day-to-day activities. However, we do encourage group giving! Check out our list of needs and see if you can come up with a fun idea to collect some of these items!

7. I still want to volunteer for the holidays if an opportunity comes up. How can I help?

Sometimes we have a few last minute needs. Send a quick email to Viki Baker letting her know you want to be on her emergency call list to complete a few tasks or to purchase a few last minute items to make holidays at UMD run smoothly.

8. I want to take photos of my group helping out at UMD. Can I post these on social media?

In general, please do not post photos of clients receiving assistance at UMD. While many are grateful for the help, confidentiality is key to a person's well-being and progress toward their goals. While it might be a very special experience for you, it may be hurtful to a person in the moment or down the road. We're sure you don't want anyone to feel exploited or for them to miss an important opportunity because their identity was revealed. However, feel free to take photos of members of your group hard at work! You can tag us along with your organization on Facebook (@UrbanMinistriesOfDurham), Instagram (@umdurham) or Twitter (@umdurham).

