

Rockville Holiday Drive

For the past forty-five years, the annual Rockville Holiday Drive has distributed food baskets and toys to needy Rockville families. Community Services Division of the Department of Housing and Community Development and other City staff are responsible for this program. Local churches, schools, civic organizations, service clubs, businesses, social service agencies, and individuals work together to collect and distribute the items to families and seniors in need.

The Holiday Drive referral process is a collaborative effort with the Montgomery County government, local social service providers, and schools, on a coordinated referral process to gather information on families in need and also to ensure that there are no duplications in service. We are referred a list of City of Rockville residents through this process and through our existing City programs serving low-income residents. Families and individuals that are referred to the Rockville Holiday Drive receive food assistance for Thanksgiving and gifts and books for children in December. Some of the families with high needs are selected for the Family Sponsorship Program and are matched with sponsors and asked to provide a gift wish list.

The City of Rockville distributes collection boxes at local community centers, libraries, grocery stores and schools to collect food and toys from the community. Monetary donations are also collected by check, cash or through online donation. For Thanksgiving, volunteer's sort and pack food boxes and families pick up their donation through a drive through model. The Thanksgiving food box includes canned goods, fresh produce, bread, pie, a gift card, a reusable bag and information about City resources. For December, volunteers and staff assist families during our annual Toy Shop and assist with selecting gifts and books for children or with wrapping gifts.

The Holiday Drive runs from November 1st to late December, with food donations being collected in November for Thanksgiving and broader items like toys and books being collected in December for gift-giving during the holiday season, while also collecting monetary donations through both months.

Because of the COVID-19 Pandemic, the 2020 Holiday Drive was limited to collecting monetary donations to buy and distribute Giant gift cards to fund needy families' Thanksgiving shopping in November, and Target gift cards to help them to buy both gifts and food in December. As a result of the generosity of its residents, the City provided 451 families and 106 seniors with grocery gift cards for the Thanksgiving holiday and in December, the City distributed 1,026 gift cards and many books to families for their children. Through the City's Family Sponsorship program, 28 families received individualized gifts purchased by sponsors.

In 2019, the Holiday Drive amassed \$93,149 worth of donations, and were thus able to provide Thanksgiving food baskets for 497 households and a Thanksgiving meal for 96 seniors in November, and 306 gift cards for teens, 182 gift cards for seniors and childless adults, and 1686 toys, books, and games for 562 kids in December. In 2019, 62 families received individualized gifts purchased by sponsors through the Family Sponsorship Program.

<https://rockvillereports.com/2019-rockville-holiday-drive-is-officially-underway/>

<https://rockvillereports.com/rockvilles-generosity-on-display-during-2019-holiday-drive/>

<https://www.rockvillemd.gov/1363/Holiday-Drive>