



# Elf Express

July 2009

## Christmas Connection's New Home!

After much anticipation and hard work, the Christmas Connection is excited to announce that we have found a new home! With the continued support of the community, we have purchased a new facility that will allow us to help even more families, children and seniors.

The building, located on the corner of May and S.W. 59<sup>th</sup> Street, is currently undergoing renovations thanks to the generosity of Van Hoose Construction and will have its official opening celebration this fall.

The new facility offers many amenities that will make it easier to serve our clients. Things that many people take for granted will now be available to our deserving clients and volunteers. The heat and air conditioning will be a welcome new addition! The facility's one story layout with a loading dock will make it easier to load and unload donations. In Oklahoma City, lack of transportation is a common barrier that prevents many individuals from accessing services. The organization's new building is located on a bus route, with a bus stop in our parking lot, making it accessible to our clients as well as volunteers.

As many of you know, our existing facility was limiting our capacity to serve our clients. As we approach our 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary, the Christmas Connection wanted to grow the number of families we serve and secure our ability to serve the community for another 30 years. Our programs have remained steady, but with greater community need, comes greater need to provide basic necessities.

The current building which was donated to the Christmas Connection provided an adequate location to serve the families of Oklahoma County. As we've grown however, the layout of the building hasn't been conducive to our programs making it difficult for our volunteers to do their job. Beyond the challenging layout of the facility, the building's condition was in dire need of modern updates including removal of asbestos and updates to all major systems including electric and plumbing.

When the opportunity to sell the building presented itself, we knew it was time to move forward with our plan for growth.

*see New Home page 2*

### Monica Stewart

When Monica Stewart walked through the doors of the Christmas Connection this spring, you could see the stress in her eyes. While summer brings joy to many, Monica was plagued with anxiety about providing for her children. With the tough economy, the Stewarts, like many hard working families, were struggling.

Raising a teenager with disabilities, a 3 and a 4-year-old son, requires Monica to be the stay-at-home caretaker. Relying on her husband's sole income to support the family, basic necessities that most people take for granted such as clothing and toiletries are expenses that their budget just can't cover.

But a smile was brought to her face as Monica entered the Christmas Connection for the first time. As she walked through the aisles at Spring Fling, Monica filled her basket with necessities like children's clothes, school uniforms, toiletries and books for her children.

"I can't afford to buy basic things these days, so being able to shop for my children helps a great deal and alleviates some stress," Monica said.

Thanks to your generosity, the Stewarts along with the 421 other families who shopped for necessities at Spring Fling this year are able to enjoy their summer a little more.



*Monica Stewart holding a bag of books  
Shopping for her 3 boys, ages 4, 7 and 13*

(New Home from page 1)

While we have reached a major milestone with the purchase of this building, we are in need of your support. The Christmas Connection is seeking an additional \$325,000 for the purchase of this building that will allow us to grow our services and continue to serve more than 7,700 children, adults and seniors annually.

We thank everyone who is making this dream a reality and ask for your enduring support as we continue raising funds for our capital campaign. If you'd like more information or to donate to the capital campaign fund, contact Tony LoPresto, capital campaign chair, at 514-3086 or [tonyl@loves.com](mailto:tonyl@loves.com).

With a new facility, we will be able to increase our capacity, giving more children access to school supplies, backpacks and uniforms; allowing more families without insurance to rebuild their lives after a crisis; and decreasing the number of parents who have to choose between skipping a meal and buying their child a Christmas present.

Stay tuned for more information about our grand opening celebration this fall.

*Contributors to the capital campaign to date include an anonymous family foundation, Bank of America, James R. Brown Foundation, Chesapeake Energy, the Christmas Connection's board of directors, Devon Energy, E.L. and Thelma Gaylord Foundation, Meinders Foundation, Panhandle Oil & Gas, and the Anne & Henry Zarrow Foundation.*

## Volunteer Opportunities

Shopper assistants are needed during general store shopping days on, July 11 and 25 from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Volunteers needed to pack the store on August 1<sup>st</sup> starting at 9am. We will continue packing everyday that week during the day and into the evenings.

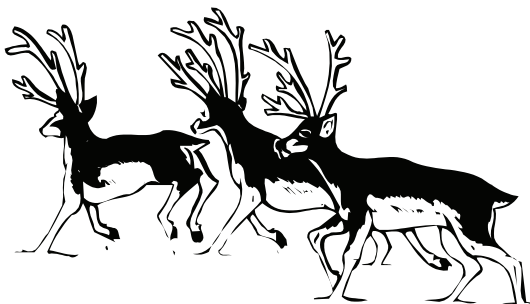
Volunteers are needed to help load the trucks on Big Move Day on August 8. We will start at 9 a.m. and go until we are finished. We have four semi trucks donated to help with the move.

Drivers wanted for four hour shifts once a week to pick up donations and drop off various items such as collection boxes. The Christmas Connection will provide the vehicle.

A volunteer coordinator for Christmas Shopping Days is needed. This person is responsible for contacting and scheduling volunteers during our Christmas Shopping Days in December. This is a fun way to get to know other people in the community and help touch hundreds of lives.

For more information on these or any other volunteer opportunities, please contact the office at (405) 634-2006.

*Don't forget to send in the volunteer hours you work outside of the store. We need your hours by the 5<sup>th</sup> of each month. You can email, fax or call them in. Thank you!*



*Save the date!*

*North Pole Winter Ball  
To benefit the Christmas Connection*

*You are cordially invited to join us at the annual Christmas Connection fundraising event.  
The evening will feature fabulous auction items, live music, dinner and dancing.*

*Saturday, October 24<sup>th</sup>, 2009  
Renaissance Ballroom, Cox Convention Center*

*Tables are available for \$1,000 and individual tickets are available for \$80.  
Auction items are joyfully accepted!*

*For more information, sponsorship levels or to purchase tickets, please contact  
The Christmas Connection office at 634-2006*

# NEW TRUCK



Thanks to the extremely generous donation made by Chesapeake Energy, the Christmas Connection is the grateful recipient of a beautiful 2007 Chevy Silverado extra cab pick-up truck. The donated truck will allow us to gather more donations from the community in a timelier manner.

Chesapeake's impact on our community, through financial donations, in-kind support, volunteerism and leadership, is to be commended.

***Thank you Chesapeake!***

Celebration Time!

## Volunteer Appreciation Dinner

Do you remember moving into the building on 25<sup>th</sup> street? Or maybe you remember helping hundreds of needy families, that were without power for nine days, during and after the 2007 ice storm! Whether your memories are from long ago or just last year, we would like you to join us in celebrating our life in this building and thank you for your selfless work.

Please join us on **Thursday, July 23** from 6 to 7:30 p.m. for a volunteer appreciation dinner. Bring your stories or just come to listen. Reminisce about all the good friends you have made over the years and the thousands of people you've helped. RSVP (405) 634-2006.

Be sure to check our new web site at  
[www.christmasconnection.org](http://www.christmasconnection.org)

Do you have a Facebook profile? We would like to invite you to be our friend on the Christmas Connection Facebook page.



## Crisis Relief Assistance



In April, we saw the devastating effects of the fires in Midwest City, Choctaw and the surrounding area. In a matter of hours, homes were lost and lives were forever changed. The community immediately began gathering items to help the families, and the Harley Davidson shop acted as a collection site gathering

everything from clothing to household items. The Christmas Connection was able to stock its shelves with the donations received from the generous individuals and businesses in our community.

The Christmas Connection normally has about one fire victim come in every couple of weeks. After the spring fires, we saw a fire victim nearly every day.

When a family falls victim to a house fire or other crisis, the stress can be overwhelming – especially when they don't have insurance. Our Crisis Relief program provides assistance throughout the year to families who have experienced a fire or some other crisis in their lives. Stocked with donations from the community, families are able to come in and shop to personally select items to help them rebuild their lives.

## Donations Needed

School uniforms, school supplies, photocopy paper, pots and pans, bath towels, kitchen towels, silverware and furniture, and of course cash donations are always needed and welcomed.

**The Christmas Connection**  
P.O. Box 891020  
Oklahoma City, OK 73189-1020

Non-Profit Org  
U.S. Postage Paid  
Oklahoma City, OK  
Permit No. 748

## Calendar of Events

### July 6

School Connection  
Collection Event Begins

### July 11 & 25

General Store Shopping Days

### July 23 (from 6:00-7:30 pm)

Volunteer Appreciation Dinner

### August 1 thru 8

Packing Party

### August 8

Big Move Day

### October 24

North Pole Winter Ball



### Store Hours

Monday - Friday  
9:00 am - 3:30 pm  
Evening and weekend times vary

### *To contact Us:*

Phone: 405-634-2006  
Fax: 405-605-2111  
Cell: 405-408-3589

e-mail: [christmasconnection@hotmail.com](mailto:christmasconnection@hotmail.com)

website: [www.christmasconnection.org](http://www.christmasconnection.org)

### Advisory Board

Lori Dickinson  
Charles Fagin  
Rusty Finley  
David Griffin  
Vickie Gourley  
Barb Munneke  
Brent Parker  
Lisa Thomas

### Board of Directors

Andrew Payne, Chairman  
Kinsey Crocker, Co-Vice Chairman  
Tony LoPresto, Co-Vice Chairman  
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Brian Conway, Assistant Treasurer  
Betty Worley, Secretary  
Linda Adams  
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Marion Paden  
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Gary Rankin  
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