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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

FREE HOLIDAY SHOPPING EXPERIENCE FOR FAMILIES IN NEED | DALLAS, TEXAS

Even a pandemic could not stop the generous supporters of Interfaith Family Services from sponsoring its Annual Christmas Store. For over 15 years, Interfaith Family Services has hosted their Annual Christmas Store where homeless and low-income families shop for FREE for their children. This year’s store will serve dozens of families in need on December 8th, 9th, and 10th at Interfaith’s Family Empowerment Center near the Lower Greenville area of east Dallas. Year after year, families who are homeless or at-risk for homelessness visit the store to select that *perfect* gift for their infants, teens, and everyone in between. New toys and items to fill the store are contributed by a variety of Santa’s helpers including individual families, local businesses, and other groups. According to Amazon, this year’s most popular toys include LOL Surprise Dolls and just about anything Star-Wars themed . . . thankfully, the Interfaith Family Services Christmas Store has it all!

Interfaith’s Chief Executive Officer, Kimberly Williams, shares, *“What makes our Annual Christmas Store special is that it gives parents the opportunity to select those toys and gifts that they feel are best for their children and it gives them hope that this time next year, they will be able to afford to do so for themselves.”* While parents shop for everyone on the “Nice” list, their children enjoy fun holiday games or crafts and even get to shop for their parents, too. All gifts are wrapped by volunteer “elves” and loaded up into vehicles – which become so full of boxes and bows that they begin to look like Santa’s sleigh by the end of the night. The families that are invited to shop at the Christmas Store are homeless families that reside with Interfaith through their Home & Hope Transitional Housing Program as well as non-residential clients who receive rental assistance. These parents – and their precious children – would likely wake up on Christmas morning without a single present under the tree if not for Interfaith. While the COVID-19 pandemic has cancelled many things, Interfaith’s team simply could not let it cancel this opportunity to spread Christmas cheer!

All staff, visitors, and volunteers will be required to wear masks, social distance, and have their temperature checked upon entering the building. Sanitation stations and air purifiers will be placed throughout the facility; nightly disinfecting will also be completed. Although Santa Claus is usually available for a photo op in the children’s area, that tradition is not conducive to social distancing, unfortunately. (Shh. . . don’t tell anyone, but we hear ole’ Saint Nick might just make an appearance outside Interfaith’s Moody Family Childcare & Youth Services Center next week. Add “Santa Spotting” to the list of Interfaith Family Services’ Christmas traditions!) For inspiring stories of hope and holiday cheer from both the clients and volunteers participating in this year’s store, we invite you to attend as well. Please contact Jessica Rood (contact information above) to make arrangements.

ABOUT INTERFAITH FAMILY SERVICES

For 35 years, Interfaith Family Services has been a leading resource for working poor families and a haven for homeless children who long for stability and hope. Interfaith Family Services offers transitional housing for families experiencing homelessness and rental assistance for families experiencing a financial crisis. Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, Interfaith has coached hardworking parents through the job application and interview process, budgeting and debt-reduction, and offered 0-5 childcare and virtual learning support for school-aged children. This holistic approach produces remarkable results that elevate entire families out of poverty: 88% of adults exit with full-time employment at an average wage of $16.02/hour, 92% of families exit into permanent housing, and 72% exit with a savings safety net of $1,418 on average. For more information, please contact Jessica Rood, Director of Development at jrood@interfaithdallas.org or visit <https://interfaithdallas.org/get-involved/donate/>.

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