

De Blasio Administration Provides Gifts to Over 3,700 NYC Children and Youth through Secret Snowflake this Holiday Season

December 23, 2020

The holiday initiative led by NYC Service, in collaboration with other City agencies, leverages City government volunteers and private sector partnerships to distribute gifts citywide

NEW YORK—Mayor Bill de Blasio and NYC Chief Service Officer Anusha Venkataraman announced today that holiday wishes from more than 3,700 New York City children and youth were fulfilled by more than 2,000 volunteers from City government, including the Mayor and First Lady McCray, and the private sector through the seventh annual Secret Snowflake gift-giving initiative.

"The holidays can be really apprehensive for many children and youth in our city, but New Yorkers have shown once again how powerful we are when we work together to help those that need us," said **Mayor Bill de Blasio**. "Especially this year, I want to thank every volunteer who took time to make someone's holiday wish come true and all of our private sector partners that donated gifts to youth and children that need them the most."

"Secret Snowflake is a wonderful example of the giving spirit and generosity of New Yorkers. So many people have stepped up to support their communities and neighbors," said **First Lady Chirlane McCray**. "I appreciate the tremendous effort of all the volunteers, City agencies and businesses to bring comfort and cheer to thousands of New York City children and youth during this holiday season."

Secret Snowflake mobilizes City and private sector employees as volunteers to answer letters from children and youth referred by City agencies. Since 2014, Secret Snowflake has answered the holiday wishes of more than 19,000 New York City children and youth, ranging in age from one month to 18 years old. The holiday season can be an especially difficult time for New York's vulnerable youth and their families, and this year, NYC Service adapted the drive to ensure it could happen safely despite the COVID-19 pandemic.

"This year has been marked by unique challenges brought on by the pandemic – from the loss and sickness of loved ones to remote learning and economic hardships – and our city's youth have had to overcome a lot of obstacles. Secret Snowflake is an opportunity for City and private sector employees to help New York City families and youth feel connected to a community that cares during the holiday season," said **NYC Chief Service Officer Anusha Venkataraman**. "We are so grateful for the continued partnership of our fellow City employees and the corporate sector."

NYC Service partnered with the Administration for Children's Services (ACS), the Department for the Aging (DFTA), the Department of Education (DOE), the Department of Homeless Services (DHS), the Human Resources Administration (HRA), and the Mayor's Office to End Gender-Based Violence (ENDGBV) to collect letters from children and youth served by their agencies before the holiday season. Secret Snowflake letters typically request necessities, such as clothing, shoes, or a warm coat to get through the winter, as well as toys, books, and other game-based activities. NYC Service also partnered with the Department of Veterans' Services (DVS) to provide a donation of over 300 books to veterans and their families.

"The holidays are a time for giving and helping grant wishes for children and families in need across the City," said **Administration for Children's Services Commissioner David Hansell**. "We are grateful to NYC Service, the volunteers, and New Yorkers from across the City, for ensuring the holidays are filled with joy and happiness to make the season special for the many children served by ACS."

"The Secret Snowflake initiative embodies the compassion of our City during the holidays, bringing communities together to support children and families in need," said **HRA Administrator Gary Jenkins**. "We are proud to once again join NYC Service, our sister City agencies, and private partners in supporting a program that provides a much-needed moment of joy to nearly 500 children in HRA facilities during this unusual holiday season."

"Now more than ever, we look to every New Yorker to help uplift their neighbours in need every which way they can," said **Department of Homeless Services Administrator Joslyn Carter**. "We are grateful for the Secret Snowflake initiative which will brighten up the holidays for over 1,000 children experiencing homelessness through a variety of gifts, helping us make this the best possible Christmas it can be for the families we serve during these exceptionally challenging times. This NYC Service initiative continues to remind us of the important role communities and private partners play in helping New Yorkers in need get back on their feet, during the holidays and beyond."

The Mayor's Office for International Affairs also engages the diplomatic community in Secret Snowflake. This year's participants included the Permanent Missions of Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Germany, the Netherlands, and Norway.

"This year, Secret Snowflake has been an especially meaningful chance for the City to work with the world's largest diplomatic community to help bring some much-needed joy to vulnerable New Yorkers as we all continue to deal with COVID-19," said **Mayor's Office for International Affairs Commissioner Penny Abeywardena**. "We are so grateful to Missions to the United Nations, our Consulates, and the United Nations for providing gifts and showing love for hundreds of children and families this holiday season."

New York City's private sector is a major contributor to Secret Snowflake. This year, employees from 17 NYC businesses responded to Secret Snowflake letters. NYC Service supplemented their gifts with donations from small and large businesses across the city, valued at nearly \$17,000.

2020 Secret Snowflake Business Volunteers

- A&E Television Networks
- AXIS Capital
- Brookfield Properties
- Chanel
- Deutsche Bank
- Filthy Rich Barbershop
- Future PLC
- J.Crew
- Macy's
- Neuberger Berman
- NYC Football Club
- Prevail Therapeutics
- Revlon
- SL Green Realty Corp
- Synpulse USA
- The New York Times
- Turner Construction

2020 Secret Snowflake In-Kind Partners

- Greenlight Bookstore
- HarperCollins Publishers
- Macy's
- Miller Druck
- Mollon Law Firm
- Sony Corporation of America
- Oracle

"After participating for the first time this year, Deutsche Bank is grateful for the ability to benefit youth experiencing homelessness through this initiative. Our employees were able to fulfill 1,000 letters and were especially eager to bring deserving children happiness during this challenging holiday season," said **Alessandra DiGiusto, Executive Director of Deutsche Bank Americas Foundation and Head of CSR Americas at Deutsche Bank.**

"We at Miller Druck believe deeply in Secret Snowflake's mission to spread holiday cheer to the most vulnerable families in our city. It was our privilege to turn our facility, usually filled only with marble and stone, into a distribution center for gifts that will bring joy, and also necessities, to children in need. Especially during this direst of years, we were grateful for an opportunity to provide much needed help," said **Barbara Cohen, President at Miller Druck.**

"In a year of extraordinary challenges and great need, Neuberger Berman is honored to play a small role in partnership with NYC Service to brighten children's holidays," said **Maria Angelov, President, The Neuberger Berman Foundation, and Vice President, Corporate Social Responsibility at Neuberger Berman.**

"New York City Football Club is proud to participate in NYC Service's Secret Snowflake for the fifth year in a row. We have more staff volunteer each year which is a testament to how much our Club cares about our community. But, importantly, none of this could be done without the leadership of NYC Service. We appreciate all of the hard work and organizing required to make this initiative happen and we are proud to team up with NYC Service and partners to provide a bit of joy to the children in New York City's foster care and shelters during the holiday season" said **Paul Jeffries, Executive Director of New York City Football Club's City in the Community Foundation.**

"SL Green is a home-grown company and is committed to meeting the needs of our fellow New Yorkers. The events over the past few months have been a reminder of just how fortunate we are, as we see thousands of our neighbors without jobs and too often without access to essential resources. We are proud to do our part by partnering with NYC Service for the third consecutive year to give back to our community during the holiday season," said **Lynne-Courtney Hodges, Vice President of Human Resources at SL Green.**

"Sony is honored to support the Secret Snowflake initiative," said **Karen Kelso, Senior Director, Corporate Social Responsibility at Sony Corporation of America.** "The holidays are about giving

back to those less fortunate and we are grateful to have the opportunity to do so. Thank you, NYC Service and the Mayor's Office, for continuing such a worthwhile endeavor, especially in 2020."

"This is our third year in a row participating in Secret Snowflake, and it's something that we always look forward to at the end of the year. The opportunity to bring others joy and happiness during the holidays is a special and welcomed tradition at Synpulse USA. We particularly appreciate the opportunity to do so this year as COVID-19 continues to impact us and our communities. We're grateful for NYC Service and the Mayor's Office for organizing this opportunity and giving us the chance to embrace the true spirit of the season of giving and to help those most in need in our city," said **Kara Funk, Human Resources Business Partner at Synpulse USA.**

About NYC Service

NYC Service is a division of the Mayor's Office that builds partnerships to deepen and expand civic engagement through volunteer and service programs, creating sustainable change for our city's greatest needs. We unite New Yorkers in service to advance lifelong civic engagement for a more equitable and inclusive city. To learn more about NYC Service and connect to volunteer opportunities, visit nyc.gov/service.

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