



**HEALTHY NEIGHBORHOODS  
HEALTHY FAMILIES**



**NATIONWIDE  
CHILDREN'S®**

*When your child needs a hospital, everything matters.*



**HEALTHY NEIGHBORHOODS HEALTHY FAMILIES**  
**COMMUNITY ENRICHMENT**



### South Side Santa

*Free Store Serves 500 Children During the Holiday Season*

Most people admit they need at least a little help getting through the chaos and craziness of the winter holiday season. But ask Dessaree Watters how much help she needs and her answer might surprise you.

“Oh, I need about 150 volunteers; 200 if you count all the preparation work,” she says.

That might sound like a lot until you know that Dessaree throws one of the biggest Christmas parties on the South Side. As the director of the Free Store at the United Methodist Church for All People on Parsons Avenue, Dessaree oversees Christmas

Shop, a one-day event that provides over \$50,000 worth of new toys, bikes and clothing to 500 South Side children ages 0 to 12 years.

To be fair, calling Christmas Shop a one-day event does not do it justice. As Dessaree talks about Christmas Shop early in September, she notes that calls have already started. Potential donors start reaching out in the middle of summer and her team begins the serious planning as soon as they get through back-to-school projects in late August. In fact, some aspects of Christmas Shop, like cultivating donors and collecting brand new bikes, are year-round endeavors.



“It is always in the back of my mind,” she says.

Dessaree’s commitment to this work comes from her own experiences. After growing up in Urbana, Ohio, and living in Chicago for several years, she moved to Columbus in 2013. While things in Columbus started out well for her, a period of unemployment caused some hard times. Those hard times led to Dessaree’s first experience with the Free Store. She needed some help and came there as a shopper.

“It was hard. It can be humiliating to get these kinds of services,” she says.

At the same time, she felt gratitude that she was able to get some of the support she needed. As her

situation improved, she committed to giving back. She and her daughter became regular volunteers at the Free Store.

After a couple of years volunteering, the position of Free Store assistant coordinator opened up. Dessaree saw joining the staff as a way for her story to come full circle. She wanted to help others just as the Free Store had helped her. She applied for the job and was hired. Not long after, Dessaree was promoted to Free Store director, a post she has held for about two years. Over those two years, she has proven to be an impeccable organizer and administrator. Those skills notwithstanding, she knows the main reason she received this opportunity.

“I’ve been there,” she says. “I can relate and be empathetic.”

That empathy gives Dessaree a special perspective on Christmas Shop. The task of being Santa Claus to 500 children might seem burdensome to some people. Add to that the fact that COVID-19 restrictions will likely force difficult changes to this year’s event. Registration and shopping will have to be spread out over multiple days and include strict health safety procedures. You could understand the program director dreading what lies ahead. Not Dessaree.

“It is my favorite time of the year. It is very emotional. There are lots of tears and hugs as I get to experience the joy of seeing parents have a burden taken off their shoulders,” she says. “There are lots of places that do Christmas, but not like ours. We give people real choices for what to get their kids.”

Christmas Shop provides incredible choices to its participants. During registration, Dessaree’s staff gets the clothing sizes of every child who signs up. She and her team then make sure that there are enough new clothes so that the 500 participants get a complete outfit that fits just right. That level of detail requires mountains of inventory that can’t be received through clothing donation drives, so Dessaree and her elves must go shopping.

“Oh, one year, we just went to the South Side Walmart to get most of the clothes. Three of us felt like we bought all of the clothes in the kid’s department,” she says. “We went up to the front of the store with this caravan of 12 shopping carts filled to overflowing. People were stopping us and asking if there was a big sale they should know about. ‘No,’ we said, ‘this is just us shopping.’”

They had so much stuff that the store staff asked them to go to a separate check out so they wouldn’t hold up the regular lines.

Dessaree says the work of Christmas Shop leaves she and her staff exhausted. They feel a sense of relief when the big event finally closes.

“It is a long day, for sure,” she says. “My calendar is marked. My vacation starts the day after Christmas Shop is over!”

A little bit of relaxation seems like a perfect gift for the person who throws the biggest Christmas party on the South Side.

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## Free Store Christmas Shop 2020 Important Dates

### Registration:

November 30, 2020  
9 a.m. to Noon

### Christmas Shop:

December 18, 2020  
December 19, 2020

### Requirements:

- Must live in zip code: 43206 or 43207
- Children must be 12 years old and under
- 4 children per household

### Documents Needed for

#### Registration:

- Birth Certificate/Insurance Card
- State ID
- Proof of Residence
- Lease
- Utility bill

#### To Donate:

If you want to donate to Christmas Shop, call the Free Store at (614) 443-1713. If you want to donate new bicycles for Christmas Shop, call Bikes for All People at (614) 670-8685.

*“It is my favorite time of the year. It is very emotional. There are lots of tears and hugs as I get to experience the joy of seeing parents have a burden taken off their shoulders. There are lots of places that do Christmas, but not like ours. We give people real choices for what to get their kids.”*

— Dessaree Watters, Director of the Free Store

## Speak Up for Your Community

State laws and policies affect all parts of your life, from employment, to housing, to health care. Advocating on behalf of your family and your community allows lawmakers to hear from their constituents and make better informed decisions. Your voice can help develop and impact policies that affect your daily life.

To find your members of the Ohio House and Senate, visit [legislature.ohio.gov](https://legislature.ohio.gov).

- Use the “Who Represents Me?” box to search via ZIP code.
- Once you find your elected officials, search their pages to find their proposed legislation.
- Call or write to their offices to voice support.
- Follow them on social media for updates.

To search for pending bills by issue, visit

<https://www.legislature.ohio.gov/legislation/search>.

- This site will allow you to see all the proposed legislation in Ohio.
- To search by topic, including health care, education or employment, use the “Subject” section of the filter.

For Columbus City Council legislative updates, visit

<https://www.columbus.gov/council/toolkit/>.

- Information on Council meetings, legislation and email updates can be accessed through this site.



## A Different Kind of PlayStreets

One of the goals of the Healthy Neighborhoods Healthy Families initiative is to help children and their families live healthy, active lives. In the summer of 2019, that goal was met by offering PlayStreets, a block party of fun, physical activities. PlayStreets included things like a bike rodeo, outdoor games, water balloons and a bounce house.

COVID-19 precautions made it impossible to offer these kinds of activities in a safe, responsible way during 2020. Our PlayStreets team remained determined to do something for our South Side neighbors, however. So, one of our team members came up with a great idea – PlayStreets-in-a-Box!

Fifty families signed up to receive a box full of things that would encourage outdoor recreation and help families play together on days when the weather kept everyone indoors. PlayStreets boxes included kickballs, frisbees, bubbles, water balloons, jump ropes, crayons, coloring books, water bottles and UNO cards. Every family also received a gift card for a large pizza from Donato's so they could refuel after a day of outdoor activity!

We hope everyone had a great time with their activities. Our staff had a great time putting together PlayStreets-in-a-Box. And, if health and safety allow, we look forward to the incredible fun of having live PlayStreets again in summer of 2021!

## Shoe-pendous News!

*1,300 Pairs of Shoes Donated to South Side Organizations*

Thanks to DSW and the nonprofit charity Soles4Souls, the Nationwide Children's Hospital Foundation received a donation of new kids shoes in August. The Healthy Neighborhoods Healthy Families (HNHF) team worked with the Foundation to make sure almost 1,300 pairs of these shoes were distributed to our neighborhood partner organizations, such as Community Development for All People (CD4AP), the Driving Park and Barrack Recreation Centers, the Reeb Avenue Center and South Side Early Learning.



How important are shoes for kids? Read this account from HNHF staff member and South Side Thrive Director Sarah Lenkay:

“I was at Reeb Center the other day helping with voter registration during the lunch service when a group of young girls from the neighborhood came to pick up meals for themselves. I noticed three of the girls didn't have shoes on. At first, I thought they were just doing what kids do, running out of the house carefree. After thinking about it a moment, I realized this might not be the case. So, I caught up to them while they were walking home down the alley behind Reeb Center and asked if they needed shoes. They immediately responded yes! We went back inside the center to help them find a pair that fit. These girls were grinning ear to ear with their new shoes. They also got a supply bag of hygiene products. The one little girl was about 6 years old carrying her baby doll. I'm so glad we happened to have these shoes to give them.”

Thanks, Sarah, for being tuned in to our neighbors. And thanks to DSW, Soles4Souls and the Nationwide Children's Hospital Foundation for the donation!



HEALTHY NEIGHBORHOODS HEALTHY FAMILIES  
EDUCATION



## Explore STEM Education and Employment

*Free Program for High Schoolers*

Nationwide Children's Upward Bound Math & Science Program is still accepting applications for the 2020-2021 academic school year. The program offers:

- Monthly academic advising sessions
- Saturday experiential learning sessions
- Mentoring and tutoring
- Hands-on STEM exploration
- Work-study opportunities within Nationwide Children's Hospital
- Year-round college and career readiness activities
- Summer academic college experiences and tours

To participate, students must be a current 9th, 10th or 11th grade student who attends or whose home Columbus City School is Marion-Franklin or South. Participants must also identify as potential first-generation college students with family taxable household income 150% of Federal Poverty Level or below. For additional information, questions about eligibility requirements, or to apply online, visit [NationwideChildrens.org/UpwardBound](https://www.nationwidechildrens.org/upwardbound) or email [UBMS2@NationwideChildrens.org](mailto:UBMS2@NationwideChildrens.org).

Check out this FREE program and apply TODAY!



## SPARK – Kindergarten Readiness Program

**Read** books!

**Write** letters and numbers!

**Discover** letter sounds!

**Learn** new words!

**Do** preschool math!

**Free** books and supplies!

*Children who are in the SPARK program do better on school testing than children who have not been in SPARK.*

SPARK is accepting children who will enter kindergarten in the fall of 2021.

If you live in ZIP codes 43205, 43206 or 43207, help your child get ready for kindergarten with SPARK. SPARK is a free program where your child's teacher will work with you virtually or through social distancing visits. Each month the teacher meets with the family to work on lessons around the book they bring. The teacher has fun things for your child like Play-Doh, crayons, safety scissors and of course books. Pass the word!

Please email [SPARK@NationwideChildrens.org](mailto:SPARK@NationwideChildrens.org) for more details or call **(614) 355-0714**.



HEALTHY NEIGHBORHOODS HEALTHY FAMILIES  
HEALTH & WELLNESS



## Remote Learning and COVID: Tips for Staying Sane

*By Aden Moges, LISW-S, Clinical Lead School Based Supervisor, Nationwide Children's Hospital*

We've never experienced anything like the current school year due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Students may struggle in new ways due to the changes in their learning environments. Families and caregivers may struggle to adjust strategies and routines. Here are some tips for distance learning.

### Routines

- Treat the day as a normal school day. Continue with typical morning routines of waking up, eating breakfast, brushing teeth and getting dressed. This helps children ready their minds for the day ahead. It will also make any future transition back to the physical school much easier.
- Post a clear schedule which is developmentally appropriate. For young children, draw pictures of their daily schedule. For older children, write out a schedule.
- Do daily check-ins, particularly with teens, to keep an open line of communication and to see how their day is going.

*(Continued)*

- Teach your teen how to use a written or electronic planner and do weekly checks to ensure they are turning in assignments. Encourage them to write in birthdays and important personal events in addition to school-related items.

### Workspace

- Create a workspace specifically for your child. If a smaller child is going to be sitting at a kitchen table, use pillows or books to boost them up in the chair as well as having ottomans under their feet. This will make them more comfortable and less likely to get out of their seats.
- Keep the space as quiet as possible so the child can hear instructions and focus on work. Encourage the use of headphones.
- Make the space their own. Help your child organize their supplies and ensure they are easily available without assistance (pencil cups, pencil boxes).
- Have a small box of fidgets and calm down tools. These can be simple homemade items the child can hold while still paying attention to the class.
- Encourage reduced use of television, radio, video games or smartphones during school hours to increase focus and concentration.

### Rewards

- Provide movement breaks. Encourage as much physical movement as possible when your child is not in front of a computer. GoNoodle (family.gonoodle.com) is a great resource that includes songs and dances. For teens, encourage walks during the day.
- If permitted by the teacher, have water available for your child to reduce getting out of their seat during instruction time.
- Set up a rewards program at home for completing school-related tasks throughout the day. Example tasks include attending live class sessions, completing homework and demonstrating positive behaviors. As incentives, use small, no-cost rewards such as extra screen time, more privileges, dinner choices and movie nights.
- Be sure to tell your teen that you see they are working hard during this difficult time. Give them specific examples of times they impressed you or something they did that made you proud.

### Emotional tools

- Identify a calm down box for when your child needs a break. It can include items that regulate your child such as paper, crayons, a stress ball, several Legos, etc.
- If you are struggling to support your child, ask their teachers or school counselors for some tips on how to help them be more successful. They want to help your child!
- Give yourself permission to focus on mental and emotional health. Provide your child with empathy when they are struggling and remind them this will not last forever.
- Encourage as much independence as possible. Treat the virtual learning similar to when you drop your child off at school or the bus. Allow the teachers to lead and only intervene for technology issues or significant behavioral concerns.
- Talk to your teen about what friends they have at school. Encourage them to connect outside of the school day to reduce isolation.

Most importantly, this is a new, stressful and overwhelming circumstance for everyone. Be sure to model patience and kindness for your child and remember to show yourself some grace as well.

If you think your child might need a referral for Behavioral Health Services, call the Nationwide Children's Big Lots Behavioral Health Intake Department at **(614) 355-8080**. You can also read more about coping with COVID at <https://cap4kids.org/columbus/coronavirus/>.



## Why Do Kids Need to Go to the Doctor So Often?

It's tempting to put well checks, immunizations and doctor visits on hold with COVID-19. But if you're a parent, you know how fast children grow – physically and emotionally. And your questions and concerns grow right along with them. This is why well child visits are so important. Well child visits help:

### 1. Prevent illness and injury.

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends the following immunization schedule for youth ages 18 and younger. Immunizations are designed to prevent illness. Well child visits are also a great time to discuss general safety in your home or child's day care or school to prevent injury. For example, your pediatrician can be a resource on car seat safety and your state's laws, or maybe you're a brand new parent and want to make sure you've baby proofed every last cabinet, blind, window and outlet in your home.

### 2. Track growth and development.

At well visits, your child's height, weight, head circumference and milestones are recorded. This allows your pediatrician to track their growth and development and identify any problems. Hearing, vision and other screening tests may be a part of the visit as well.

### 3. Raise concerns.

Are you worried about your child's size? Or maybe you have a picky eater, or you're convinced they will still be wearing diapers when they are 5. Well child visits are the perfect time to discuss these, and other issues, with your pediatrician. Jot down your questions throughout the year in the Notes app on your phone. And remember, physical health is just as important as mental health. Maybe you've noticed your child is quieter than usual, or has lost interest in some of the things they used to love doing. Talk to your doctor about it. Maybe it's normal pre-teen or teen behavior, and maybe it's not. Your provider can help you get to the root of the problem, or refer you to someone who can help.

It's important to find a provider early in your child's life that you like and connect with. After all, you will see them at least once a year, and in most cases, more often, for at least the next 18 years of your life. Going to the same provider for every visit – sick and well – builds trust and creates consistency. The better your doctor knows your child and their medical history, and your family's values, the better care they can provide.

Attending well visits regularly over the course of your child's growing up years also helps them transition to adult care when the time comes. With the help of your pediatrician, you're modeling what a doctor-patient relationship should be, and demonstrating how being proactive can lead to a healthier life.

So, what are you waiting for? Get started on your list of questions for your next visit, or get that next appointment scheduled now!

Nationwide Children's offers school-based health clinics in your neighborhood. Learn more at [NationwideChildrens.org/Care-Connection](https://www.nationwidechildrens.org/Care-Connection)



**HEALTHY NEIGHBORHOODS HEALTHY FAMILIES**  
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

**Goodwill Columbus  
Workforce Development  
is Now ONLINE**

Live workshops that focus on resume writing, interviewing, communication skills, and more!

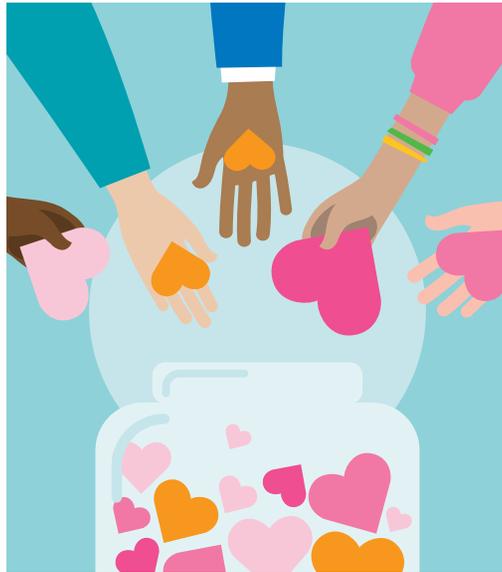
To find workshops, search Goodwill Columbus Workforce Development on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter.

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[www.facebook.com/GoodwillColumbusWFD/](http://www.facebook.com/GoodwillColumbusWFD/)

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**Instagram -** [www.instagram.com/goodwillcolswfd/](http://www.instagram.com/goodwillcolswfd/)

**Questions?** Email [Angela.hampton@gwcols.com](mailto:Angela.hampton@gwcols.com) or call or text (614) 557-2875



**2020 Buckeye Partnership Grant**

Nationwide Children’s Hospital has been awarded a \$10,000 grant from Buckeye Health Plan. Funds will be used to help support Nationwide Children’s Healthy Neighborhoods Healthy Families sustainable career path collaborative with Goodwill Columbus and Community Development for All People, including Goodwill’s highly successful Career Boot Camp. Buckeye Health Plan awards grants to community organizations throughout Ohio that are working to improve the overall quality of life and meet health care needs.



**HEALTHY NEIGHBORHOODS HEALTHY FAMILIES**  
AFFORDABLE HOUSING



**Making a House a Home**

What does your home mean to you? For many people, home is a place of comfort, shelter and safety. It’s a refuge at the end of a long day and a place to build lifelong memories. For Alma Santos and her family, however, home had a different meaning.

Alma moved to the Southern Orchards community with her three children in June 2017. Their new home had been vacant for years and was damaged from two previous fires, but Alma chose to see its potential. She loved the welcoming neighborhood, growing community and short commute to work. Her children loved the area, too. They were closer to school and enjoyed helping in the Southern Orchards community garden.

Shortly after moving in, Alma and her oldest son began working on repairs. The front porch was unsteady and sinking in. The siding was charred and falling off. The interior needed new flooring, drywall and electrical work. She hired a contractor to help with the major renovations, but began to worry when she saw no construction progress. Alma was quickly running out of money and resources. She had spent every penny of her retirement savings on faulty repairs that only made the condition of her house worse. Home had become a source of struggle and anxiety.

*(Continued)*



But then Alma’s community came to her side and offered to help. One neighbor told Alma about Healthy Homes, a nonprofit housing developer that has a home repair program that assists South Side homeowners with exterior repairs. Alma met the requirements, and applied for a grant through the program.

“When I opened the letter that said we were approved, I started crying,” says Alma. “This means so much to us. It’s truly a blessing.”

The Healthy Homes Home Repair Program provided a full exterior renovation on Alma’s home, including new roofing, siding, painting, landscaping, windows, doors, gutters, walkways and a safe front porch.

“With this help, we’re creating a more beautiful neighborhood and a safe home for my children,” says Alma.

After all the struggle and hardship, Alma’s family will finally have the home they deserve; a place of comfort, shelter and safety, a refuge and a foundation. For Alma and her family, home finally means happiness.

For more information on Healthy Homes, visit [healthyhomesco.org](http://healthyhomesco.org)

*“When I opened the letter that said we were approved, I started crying. This means so much to us. It’s truly a blessing.”*

—Alma Santos, Mother

## About Healthy Neighborhoods Healthy Families

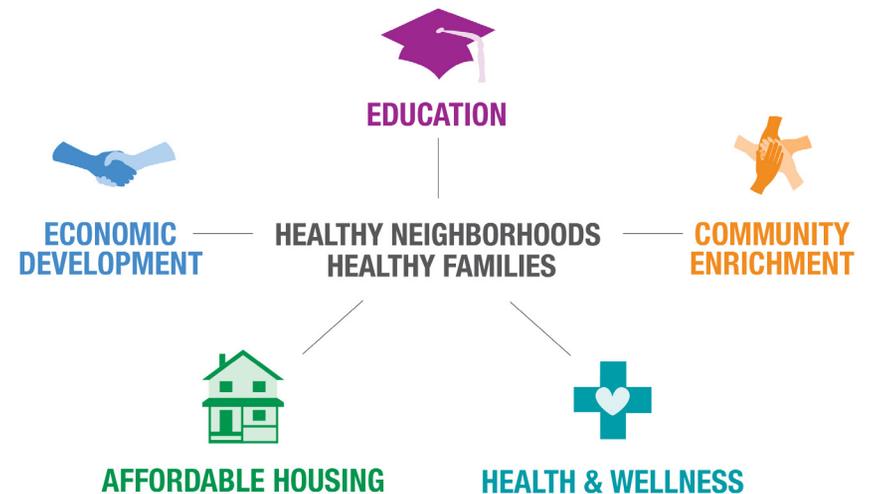
The Healthy Neighborhoods Healthy Families (HNHF) initiative, composed of faith-based organizations, community development organizations, workforce development programs, youth-serving nonprofits and local public schools, seeks to create positive health outcomes in the community.

HNHF began on Columbus’ South Side, the area around Nationwide Children’s, and has proven it can improve community, family and individual wellbeing.

HNHF focuses on five target areas: affordable housing, education, health and wellness, economic development and community enrichment.

Learn more at

[NationwideChildrens.org/Healthy-Neighborhoods-Healthy-Families](http://NationwideChildrens.org/Healthy-Neighborhoods-Healthy-Families)





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CHILDREN'S**

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