

Sharing Runs in the Family

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When Aisha Greenlee-Wognum brought her grandmother shopping on Saturday, their purpose was to pick up some groceries and pass a lesson about sharing on to 4-year-old Milo. After all, Aisha was raised to understand how good it feels to help people. So, this would be the year her son saw an example just the way her “Gram” had shown her.

“I reminded him we were there to pick out toys for kids who might not get toys this Christmas,” Aisha said. “Two toys for Gram to give and two toys for us to give.”

When Milo gave her a high five and started picking out the toys they would donate to a local church, everything was perfect. If everything went as planned, she decided she would fit another toy into their budget for Milo.

Then the Store Director at the Evergreen Park, Ill. Meijer walked up and Aisha’s plans for their shopping trip changed.

“I am getting a little teary right now just thinking about it,” Aisha said. “We were just putting the third toy in the cart when the store director said ‘hello.’ She told me Meijer had a special holiday gift for us. It was a \$1,000 gift card and she hoped it brightened our holiday. I was just completely shocked.”

As one of [hundreds of customers surprised](#) at Meijer stores across the Midwest last weekend, Aisha and Milo were picked to receive a special holiday gift as part of the store’s annual *Very Merry Meijer* tradition.

After calling Gram, who was shopping for their groceries, to tell her that their lesson plan about the importance of giving had changed, Aisha told Milo to keep picking toys. They shopped for almost 2 hours, sharing the benefits of their *Very Merry Meijer* surprise, and adding more toys for the local church.


They had heard about the [Operation Cover Chicago](#) toy drive at Another Chance Church last year when it was having difficulties meeting its annual goal to provide toys to 20,000 kids in the greater Chicagoland area. This Christmas, requests have more than doubled because of unemployment and other hardships due to the pandemic.

“Before COVID-19, being underserved, underprivileged meant it was a hassle to buy Christmas gifts, but now it’s impossible,” said Kenyatta Smith, the program’s founder. “I remember what it felt like when I was a child and found nothing under the Christmas tree, so anything neighbors in our communities can offer brings us closer to providing not only gifts, but shows them we’re all in this together, that there’s always hope.”

In the end, Aisha and Milo filled three carts with unexpected gifts and packed Gram’s hatchback with the spirit of sharing. Milo even got the chance to take a picture with Pastor Smith.

“I’ve never been able to be really generous or buy gifts for everyone I care about during the holidays, so the chance to give more this year is really, really special,” she said. “I hope Milo always remembers this day and we never forget giving, getting and sharing can all be the same thing.”

“Gram and I always used to joke that we never ‘win’ anything ... I guess we can’t say that anymore.”

Additional assets available online:  **Photos** (4)

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