

10 Years of Very Merry Meijer Surprises

The holidays are a time for kindness and joy, and for the past 10 years, unsuspecting customers across all our Meijer stores witnessed the magic firsthand during our *Very Merry Meijer* surprise and delight event when they were gifted with shopping sprees and their carts brimming with goodies.

In total, the 10 *Very Merry Meijer* events surprised more than 4,400 customers with more than \$2 million in holiday gifts and groceries. The surprises were given to customers at random upon checkout or while shopping in the aisles. We've also surprised our team members.

Here are some of our favorite *Very Merry Meijer* stories:

Elizabeth Flores was at the Grand Haven Meijer with her 7-year-old son, Xzavier, one December day in 2014 doing some holiday shopping when they were surprised by Doug Meijer, a member of the Meijer Board of Directors, upon checkout with their entire basket – and a bike for Xzavier – gifted for free.

In 2015, we surprised our customers again but took it a step further when we gave them each a \$100 Meijer gift card to pay it forward. One couple in Detroit used it before they even left the store, giving their \$100 gift card to another family shopping for a holiday meal.

In 2016, the Jeffersonville, Ind. Store Director's *Very Merry Meijer* recipient broke down in tears. Her basket totaled \$398 in groceries, and she expressed that she'd been concerned that she wouldn't be able to afford any Christmas presents ... until then.

Shalina Swick was shopping at the Defiance, Ohio Meijer when she was gifted her entire shopping cart for free. She used her \$100 Meijer gift card to pay it forward to someone she knew who was overcome with medical bills.

Jaime Kowal, of Highland, Ind., was one of the selected customers in 2017. She spent an hour gathering her coupons and clipping Meijer mPerks prior to shopping – and filling two carts with merchandise – and was moved to tears when she was surprised at checkout with her gifts.

In 2018, the O'Neil family was the *Very Merry Meijer* recipient in Marysville, Ohio. They spent a lot of time at the store, filling three carts with clothes, toys, electronics and shoes. They were donating everything to the Common Ground Free Store in Delaware, Ohio, which is a place where those in need can get the items they need for free. When they realized Meijer was paying for everything, they decided to donate whatever the total amount was to Common Ground Free Store on top of the items. Turns out it was \$1,595.18.

In 2019, the surprises turned into \$1,000 shopping sprees for a customer in each of our stores. Shareace Perkins was trying to get some Christmas shopping done for her 2-year-old daughter, as well as a friend, at the Okemos Meijer, but times were tough for them in 2019. The Lansing woman was thoughtfully looking at toys – even looked at a shark stuffed animal and put it back – before she was approached by a Meijer Executive and his news of the \$1,000 shopping spree.

“Oh my God, wow, is this for real?” Perkins asked after covering her face with her hands. “This is a blessing.”

The COVID-19 global pandemic didn't dampen our spirits. In fact, we spread the joy even further by surprising even more customers and team members. A Fruitport Meijer cashier was excited to meet Doug Meijer when he strolled through her checklane to make his purchases one Saturday afternoon. She sang Christmas carols, and the two chitchatted for a bit before her excitement turned to shock when he handed her a \$100 Meijer gift card to show his appreciation for all her hard work. The cashier danced around while saying, “Thank you! Thank you!”

In 2021, Kim and Deron Rutledge were shopping for their annual Toys for Tots donation when they were approached by the Champaign, Ill. Meijer Store Director and Food Night Clerk with the surprise \$1,000 gift card. The Rutledge family immediately became emotional because this year's shopping trip was especially significant. “We budget for

this donation every year, and this year we had budgeted a bit more in honor of my late mother who recently passed,” Kim Rutledge said. The Meijer team was so touched by their story that when the Store Director then turned to his Food Night Clerk to surprise him with a \$200 gift card for his hard work this year, he immediately handed it to the Rutledges to add to their donation.

“I was completely shocked,” said Lois Smith, a Cashier at the Cedar Springs, Mich. Meijer in 2022 when she received her *Very Merry Meijer* team member surprise. “With all the health issues I’ve had recently and not being able to work, this means so much. It will help a ton. Meijer has taken such good care of me.”

When Betty Cogswell, and her daughter Brittany, stopped by the Greenville Meijer a just few weeks ago to do some shopping, they had no idea they were going to be part of a beloved tradition. They were shopping for relatives and a family they adopted for the holidays when they were approached by Store Director John Koehler donning a festive hat. “We always shop at Meijer, it’s our favorite store,” said Betty, of Six Lakes. A few moments later, the pair were speechless and wiping tears from their eyes when John expressed that he was gifting them \$1,000 as part of our 10th annual *Very Merry Meijer* event to surprise and delight our customers and team members. The Cogswells said the gift would go a long way in making a difference for the family they adopted this holiday season. “It goes to show how much Meijer really truly appreciates their customers,” Betty said.

Watch this year’s *Very Merry Meijer* surprises [here](#).

Additional assets available online:  [Photos](#) ⁽¹⁾

<https://meijercommunity.com/10-Years-of-Very-Merry-Meijer-Surprises>