

Salvation Army teams with jcp.com to extend the reach of its Angel Giving Tree program

(NEWS) -- Businesses in the U.S. have dealt with sluggish sales for well over a year as family budgets continue to face headwinds along the road to a full economic recovery. Meanwhile, the prolonged economic slump has taken a bite out of another area -- charitable giving.

Charitable donations were down 3.6 percent in 2009, according to the Giving USA Foundation™, a leading resource to non-profits. Despite this sobering reality for those whose mission is to help people in need, one trend in philanthropy is offering a glimmer of hope: online giving.

The Salvation Army is one major charitable organization tapping into this trend, extending the reach of its 40-year-old Angel Giving Tree program by offering the adoption and shopping process online. The national online program, presented by JCPenney, allows customers to provide gifts for children and seniors who, due to financial hardship, may not otherwise receive presents at Christmas.

“The Salvation Army is preparing for what is expected to be another record number of families seeking help this Christmas,” said Major George Hood, national community relations and development secretary for The Salvation Army. “With the need greater than ever, we appreciate JCPenney’s commitment to continue this program so that more children and seniors living in poverty can experience the joy that one small Christmas gift can bring.”

JCPenney, in collaboration with Akamai Technologies, Sapien and Tata, has made it easy for customers to donate via the online service. Starting at jcp.com/angel, donors are guided through a short Angel selection process. After choosing an Angel online, donors will receive a confirmation e-mail with the Angel’s wish list and shipping information.

Thanks to support from UPS, Angel Giving Tree gifts purchased through jcp.com can be shipped free of charge to the corresponding Salvation Army collection center. The confirmation e-mail also includes ship-to addresses for orders placed at any retail site, as well as a link to drop-off locations in the recipient’s area.

“In the first year of this program online, nearly 40,000 Angels from across the country were adopted last Christmas,” said Thomas M. Nealon, group executive vice president for JCPenney. “Now, more than ever, customers want to make a difference during the holidays. We’ve made it easier for customers to give back in a meaningful way, and we feel confident that support for those less fortunate will only continue to grow.”

To ensure delivery by Christmas, adoptions and online purchases must be made before Dec. 10. Supporters may also purchase JCPenney gift cards through Dec. 14, which will be delivered to Angels so they can buy an item on their wish list.