

Community Toy Store Proposal

In the past Rebound of Whatcom County has partnered with personal donors, local businesses, and churches in an effort to provide a positive Christmas experience for the multitude of families that they serve. Rebound has successfully paired eager donors who have supplied donations for families who are unable to afford gifts during the Christmas season. Despite the fact that there is nothing inherently wrong with the process and that the Kingdom undoubtedly reserves a special place for the poor and the individuals who show compassion toward the poor; Rebound has found themselves in a place where they are uncovering an alternative way to show compassion (Lupton, 2007). This form of compassion leaves the giver as well as the receiver feeling valued and with a sense of dignity.

Rebound has been learning and discovering more about the importance of promoting development over betterment. The previous approach to providing families with gifts at Christmas is a form of betterment which differs from development in the sense that betterment does for others while development enables others to do for themselves (Lupton, 2007). As a result, Rebound has been contemplating new techniques to promote development instead of betterment for the next Christmas season. A solution to accomplish this new desire was formed from the model described in the book *Compassion, Justice, and the Christian Life*. The author, Robert Lupton, explains the importance and power of exchange that can be found through offering a system where the organization sells donated gifts at a reduced price rather than the previous home-delivery method of providing gifts. Lupton continues to illustrate the dynamics of such a program that would consist of using all of the donations from donors for the store and then offering the presents at a reduced price, training and hiring unemployed parents to help run the store, and most importantly presenting parents with the chance to experience the joy and dignity in personally providing for their families.

To accomplish this desire Rebound proposes partnering with Roosevelt Community Church and their all ready existing program. Every year Rebound receives requests from people who are looking for ways to give of their resources to families in need. Rebound would like to be able to send these willing donors to the Roosevelt Community Center to help strengthen the store(does it have a name?) and then be able to refer families who Rebound has served in the past to this store. Not only is Rebound interested in providing gifts through donors and referring

families, but is also very interested in getting some of the low-income families involved in the production on the store. When this idea was presented to the women at the CHAT program they responded with excitement at the opportunity to provide for their families next Christmas and for the opportunity to potentially find work and a means to pay for their purchases at the store.

As a whole, Rebound is looking for a new approach to provide Christmas for families in need in a way that promotes development, allows the families to feel valued, and presents them with the gift of dignity.

“We get out of the business of giving away. We start using our heads as well as our hearts to build value into people and relationships-value realized only when authentic exchange occurs. Again, perhaps the greatest poverty of all is having nothing of value to offer the community. I want to believe that no one in my community is that poor.” Robert D. Lupton.

Proposal:

What can workers do?

It would be important to pool the potential workers and see if anyone has previous experience that could be used in the store. It would be a great way for the workers to build upon their previous experiences as well as building new skills.

Here is a list of the potential jobs:

- *Pre-Opening:* Putting together shelves and set up arrangement, organizing the store, cleaning and creating a warm environment, taking inventory, pricing and setting up a system to keep track of the purchases. Last year it took about two hours for setup.
- *Upon opening:* Figuring out how many workers will need to be present when the store is open: someone working at the cash register or however purchases will be handled; someone in charge of customer service, someone in charge of cleaning and restocking, gift wrapping services.
- *Closing the Store:* If the store ends up closing after Christmas then there will need to be a system set up for storing the left over items, cleaning up the store, ect. If the store is going to continue to be open throughout the year, there will be a lot more jobs to consider.

- **Store Hours:** The store would be opened for one night only for about 2 hours (potentially an extra night to accommodate for families who are unable to make it that night). There will be a time schedule for buying presents that will need to be created. For example, last year Roosevelt Community Center, had a schedule that stated for the first hour families could buy two presents per child and the second hour there was unlimited purchasing.

The Location:

Last year the store was held in the Roosevelt Community Center. This upcoming year a new location will need to be found in order to accommodate for the new families and donations that will surely come as Rebound partners with Roosevelt Community Church. The location would ideally be able to host a large number of people at one time. There should be a place to have people stay while they are waiting to get into the store, due to the fact that all of the families will not be able to enter at the same time. Having a warm place for them to wait, a place where we can serve coffee, cocoa, and cookies, and a place where we can offer live music would be amazing!

These are some places to check where the store could potentially be held:

- *Roosevelt Elementary School: The gym would be an ideal place due to its size and the large parking lot.
- * Roosevelt Boys and Girls Club: This is another option that would provide a large space.
- **Storage:** Before the store opens it would be necessary to find somewhere to hold all of the donations.
 - * Look at a mini storage company and ask them to donate a space for a few months.
 - * Ask local churches if they have extra space that they would be willing to let the store use.

Donations:

“Toys are collected by churches, at office parties, by sponsoring corporations, and individual families who want their children to learn the importance of giving to others, especially those in need” (Lupton, 2007).

Who: Donations will come from a variety of sources. One option would be to present the idea and get donations from local businesses such as Bellis Fair Mall. Another option is to use the previous donors from last year, by explaining to them the new plan for Christmas giving and getting them on board. Some other ideas include setting out bins in the foyers of local churches and in local businesses.

What: There will be a list of suggested donations of toys for children from the ages of 2-11. There will need to be a way for people to find out what is still needed for donations so that everyone isn't buying the exact same thing. One way to do this is to have different lists of needs for different age groups and then evenly disperse those lists amongst the donors. There could possibly be a way for donors to look online or have them stop by the store to figure out what the store is running short on.

Potential donation ideas:

- Popular toys: There will be a list of suggested age-appropriate toys for children from the ages of 2-11. All of the toys will have to be brand new toys and should not require the use of batteries. It may be necessary to do a little bit of research to investigate what the popular toys are for the year and then offer those as suggestions for donors.
- A new option for parents with teenagers: There could be a Christmas Teen Store or a specific section of the store designated for gifts for teens. The ages would be from 12-17. It could potentially turn into a clothing store (new clothes only) or it could offer gift cards to Old Navy or other stores in the mall. As for donations, one possibility could be to partner with youth groups around town and get them involved in purchasing gifts that teenagers would be excited about receiving on Christmas.
- Clothing: There will be no clothing items at the store.
- Preparing the presents: Wrapping Paper, tape and cards. This will hopefully come from donations and then be used at the store by the designated gift wrappers. If

parents decide that they would rather wrap the presents on their own, will they be able to purchase the paper, tape, card, ect at the store?

- Focus Groups: This could be a possibility to ensure that all age groups will be represented in the store. For example, a specific group that is interested in donating could gather gifts suitable for teenagers or toddlers.

Finances:

Selling the Gifts: The store will sell the new donated gifts for 70% off of the sticker prices. There will be a limit of two gifts per child during the first phase, but towards the end, depending on how many presents are available; parents will be able to purchase more gifts.

Paying for the Gifts: No one will be allowed to pay with credit cards. Cash and checks only. By only allowing for cash and checks, it will ensure that people are not going into debt and spending responsibly.

Proceeds: Roosevelt Community Church started this new project two years ago. The first year, they earned \$300 in proceeds, the second year they earned \$820 in proceeds. Each year the proceeds are then directly donated to Rebound of Whatcom County and Whatcom Dream. This way the money goes directly back into community services. With the donated money Rebound of Whatcom County is able to put it into programs such as Ray of Hope and Compass.

Long-term Goals:

“The proceeds from the sale of donated toys is then used to hire and train unemployed parents throughout the year who will in time secure permanent, full-time employment that is sufficient enough to support their families. *Thus the gifts a Christmas not only bring great joy during the holiday season, but keep on giving all year long*” (Lutpon, 2007).

Potential for Grants:

Rebound of Whatcom County, Roosevelt Community Church, and Whatcom Dream will be partnering in an effort to receive grants that would open up doors for further long term development of this store. Ideally, this program would like to see the possibility of hired position starting in July/August for a program director. This job would include starting to find donors through networking in an effort to expand the range of volunteers and to further engage community involvement. Another task would include collecting the donations and organizing the

details of the store. It would be beneficial to hire form within and develop a sustainable program that can continue to grow. For example, one goal would be to have in five years, a year round store.

Marketing:

Participants: A very important aspect of this project will be getting the word out to people who could benefit from the store.

- One idea includes using the same format of flyer from last year as well as designing and distributing larger posters to local non-profits.
- Using the Bellingham Herald as a resource. A reporter last year asked that Roosevelt Community Center bring the story to them sooner and they could potentially do a story on the store. This could be great PR!

Donors: It would be necessary to design a way to let donor understand what's going on this Christmas and most importantly the reasoning behind the changes.

- Maybe through pamphlet/flyers?