



Every child deserves the chance to experience the magic of Christmas—the excitement of seeing Santa, the anticipation of opening gifts, and the joy of making memories with the people who matter most. That's the heart behind Operation Santa Iowa.

When Traci Schermerhorn, Executive Director and Founder of Foster SQUAD, became a foster parent, she experienced firsthand how difficult those moments can be for children and families navigating foster care. One Christmas, her foster son wasn't able to visit Santa with his biological mother. That experience inspired Traci to create Operation Santa—a celebration where children and the important people in their lives can share the joy and wonder of the season together.

What began in 2022 as a small celebration serving 55 children has grown into a statewide movement. In partnership with Four Oaks and nonprofit organizations across Iowa, Operation Santa Iowa provided gifts and holiday experiences for more than 3,300 children in 2025, made possible through the generosity of donors, volunteers, businesses, churches, and communities across the state.

Operation Santa is about more than presents. It's about helping every child feel seen, valued, included, and celebrated during the holiday season. It's about creating moments of joy, strengthening family connections, and reminding children that an entire community cares about them.

For many children, these celebrations become treasured memories—moments when they can simply be kids and experience the magic of Christmas alongside family and friends. Community support makes Operation Santa possible, and there are many ways to get involved. Sponsor a child's wish list, donate gifts or funds, organize a toy drive, volunteer, or help spread the word. Every act of generosity helps create the magic of Christmas for children and families across Iowa.

Join us in making Christmas magical for Iowa's foster, kinship, and adoptive families and the children in their care.

