



## Press Release

**The USPS Operation Santa can be hard for volunteers to find, but BeAnElf.org fills the need. Site provides the best guide available on where and how to volunteer!**

**Public can get needy kids' letters to Santa at 26 USPS branches, send gifts directly to kids**

**Make an underprivileged child smile on Christmas morning and catch the real spirit of Christmas!**

**[High resolution HD video and photos](#)**

**[MSNBC Story](#)** with Be An Elf spokesperson, December 4, 2011

**[Fox News Channel Story](#)** with Be An Elf spokesperson, December 5, 2011

**[USA Today article](#)**, November 26, 2012, posted 7pm

**December 1, 2012  
Los Angeles –**

With national news coverage anticipated December 3 – 5 as the 100th anniversary of the USPS Operation Santa program kicks off in 26 US cities, the program remains difficult to find for volunteers. BeAnElf.org makes it easy to locate the 26 participating branches, where the public can get letters to Santa written by underprivileged children. Volunteers may adopt letters asking Santa for “a warm coat”, “food or clothes” or “shoes for my older brother,” clearly written by kids who need a brighter Christmas, and then mail their gifts. It’s micro-philanthropy, direct from each volunteer to a child, with no charity involved.

The USPS program will launch Monday, December 3 in Washington DC, on December 4th in Los Angeles, and on December 5th in New York City, according to a November 26th **[USA Today article](#)**.

In all, postal branches in 26 cities will offer **Operation Santa**; typically only a single branch, usually in a major city, will offer the children's letters. Other cities will include San Francisco, Chicago, and Orlando, and others. The number postal branches offering the program is expected to grow higher during December; check [www.BeAnElf.org](http://www.BeAnElf.org) for updates to the list.

The postal service has made children's Santa letters available to the public since 1912 — but not many Americans are aware of the USPS program, or how to actually volunteer for it.

Last December, the Postal Service distributed letters to Santa from needy kids at 75 post offices. A communications officer at the USPS headquarters in Washington DC told USA Today that a wave of retirements has made it difficult for several of the postal branches to devote staff to the labor-intensive Operation Santa program.

**Locations for the USPS Operation Santa do not come up in searches at USPS.com, but because of a \$40,000 per month in-kind grant from Google for free advertising, the non-profit group BeAnElf.org makes it easy for volunteers to find participating branches. The site provides the best guide available to the public about the USPS Operation Santa program, and lets people know [how and where to get needy kids' letters to Santa](#).** It links to all [participating postal branches](#) in the US, offers [photos](#) and [tips for gifts](#) like backpacks, school supplies, new clothes, books, and a small gift for Moms, who the site notes are "often single and living below the poverty line." A few of the Moms also write to Santa. "I'm nineteen and my daughter is three," one Mom began her letter. The complete letter is on our [Real Letters to Santa](#) page; a package of high resolution copies of these, plus photos and an HD video B-roll package, are available to newsmedia [here](#).

Many people feel alone and sad over the holidays, and find great comfort and inspiration participating in the program. Others have families, and bring their kids to teach them the meaning of Christmas. Some give "Elf parties", where guests bring gifts and wrap them together. Companies with enough employee interest may adopt multiple letters.

The USPS removes children's addresses and family names from all letters, replacing them with a numbered code written on each letter. Volunteers are asked to write the code on their package, ready for mailing, and return to the Operation Santa postal branch where they adopted the child's letter to mail their package. Postal workers then take over the elf job and deliver the gifts to families. Volunteers never learn the address of the children whose letters they adopt.

Be An Elf suggests that reporters visit an "Operation Santa Room" and follow a volunteer as they read children's letters at the post office, shop for gifts for the kids, wrap them at home, perhaps together with some friends, and finally as they return to the post office to mail their package.

What children's letters say is deeply touching, but when the mail carrier knocks on a family's door and surprises a family with unexpected gifts, the smiles on the children's faces make a sweet ending to this Christmas story. This site offers [high resolution photos](#) of real kids receiving gifts, but Communications Officers at Operation Santa post offices might even arrange for reporters to follow mail carriers as they deliver volunteers' gifts to children's homes. Note that sometimes kids are not home, so be sure the mail carrier has gifts for several families. The images of the smiling children are perhaps the best part of your story; this site offers a [folder of high resolution photos of real kids getting gifts, plus high resolution scans of letters to Santa](#).

Lauren Psovsky of Brooklyn, NY, found out about the program through BeAnElf.org in December, 2009. She invited friends to a Christmas party at her home, and asked each guest to bring a gift for a

child. The following Christmas season, she got her whole apartment building involved in the program. By organizing a group of friends, she was able to divide up the work of visiting the post office, choosing letters to Santa, shopping for the gifts, and wrapping them — and had a memorable Christmas party.

When the letters to Santa start arriving at participating postal branches in late November each year, postal workers read through the letters and divide them into categories like “Needy Kids,” “Needy Moms,” and “Wish lists”. While postal staff will not comment on the selection process, it’s likely that the letters selected are mailed in from economically depressed zip codes, or the coastal area devastated by Hurricane Sandy. Every year, there are too many letters from needy kids and not enough volunteers to answer them all.

Be An Elf has also received a major grant from Google, which awarded the 501c3 group an in-kind grant of \$40,000 per month in free advertising during the Christmas season. As a result, BeAnElf is able to recruit many volunteers for the Operation Santa program.

The group’s mission is to create public awareness of the USPS program and recruit new volunteers for it, and inspire more people with the spirit of Christmas. In short, Be An Elf helps put smiles on more needy children’s faces on Christmas morning.

Please include a mention of [www.BeAnElf.org](http://www.BeAnElf.org) in your coverage of this inspiring Christmas story. Be An Elf’s website provides the best guide available to the public on how and where to participate in the Operation Santa program.

Further info follows below.

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@Howtobeanelf Twitter  
BeAnElfOrg – YouTube

CONTACT:  
[Patrick Reynolds](#), Be An Elf  
310-880-1111  
[patrick2@beanelf.org](mailto:patrick2@beanelf.org)

### **[High resolution video and photos](#)**

**Be An Elf’s [National Directory](#) links to the USPS State by State list and a USA Today map of all participating postal branches in the US**

**Media should always call the branch and speak with the communications officer to re-confirm location and hours of operation. USPS Communications staff may also be able to refer you to volunteers from the public to follow for your story, and perhaps even arrange for you to follow mail carriers as they deliver volunteers’ gifts to families and children.**

## **Three postal branches participating in 2012**

### **NEW YORK CITY**

James A. Farley Post Office, Ground floor  
421 8th Avenue  
New York, NY 10199-9998  
(33rd Street & 8th Avenue – very near Penn Station)

#### **NYC Operation Santa Hotline: (212)330-3000**

Call hotline to confirm days open and hours of operation.

December 5 – 24, Monday through Saturday from 9 am to 4 pm, except Thursdays until 7 pm.

### **LOS ANGELES**

Main Processing and Distribution Center  
7001 South Central Avenue  
Los Angeles CA 90052  
Entrance to the North Pole room is on South Central Ave, between Florence Ave & Gage Ave.  
Enter the office building entrance (not the post office).  
Hours in 2011: Tuesday and Thursday only, Noon – 2pm (to be updated)

#### **In 2011 the last day to get letters in Los Angeles was December 20th.**

The deadline for delivering gifts ready for mailing back to that branch was December 22nd.

### **BOSTON**

Fort Point Station (GMF)  
25 Dorchester Avenue, Boston MA 02205  
(Main Post Office, located adjacent to South Station tracks)

Only press may contact:  
Christine Dugas, Communications  
(617) 654-5982