

# Kids Unlimited Hope for the Holidays



## Kids Unlimited's work has become a wellspring of hope over 25 years of empowering youth.

Hope for the Holidays is KU's annual campaign to ensure support for our most vulnerable children and families. Please help us bestow some of the season's gifts on households we know will struggle during this time.

"You're trying to show them that Christmas is still a special time," said Tom Cole, KU's founder and CEO. "Kids — they still believe that the holidays have some meaning."

Basic material comforts do so much to spread holiday cheer, peace and gratitude among KU participants, nearly all of whom experience poverty. Even a simple spread of cookies and hot chocolate with marshmallows feels like a luxury to families who rarely indulge in the spirit of the season. Together, we can give them a reason to smile and inspire faith in their community's generosity and kindness.

One-hundred percent of the donations KU receives directly benefit those in need, furnishing meals and bringing joy to children and families for whom holiday wishes too often are economically out of reach. Filling the empty spaces under Christmas trees and on holiday tables also alleviates the stress, anxiety and depression families feel when their finances fall short.

"It's the most difficult time of the year for families who are struggling," said Cole. "If we don't provide that happy ending for them, they don't get it."

### Here's how you can help us give Hope for the Holidays:

- Meals delivered to our families for whom adequate nourishment is a challenge;
- Grocery bags filled with food;
- Gift cards for household items (toilet paper, soap, laundry), groceries and gas;
- New, warm blankets and bedding;
- New, warm clothes for youth of all ages — in toddler to adult sizes;
- New coats, undergarments and socks for children and youth of all sizes;
- New toys, books, puzzles and games to brighten our children's holidays.

Use this QR code to make an online financial donation:



Whether it's providing daily nutrition, supporting students' academic goals or meeting the socio-emotional needs of our community's highest risk families, KU's work inspires children to better themselves while bettering their communities. Our nonprofit's focus is achieving equity for youth who face economic and cultural barriers. We are driven by the belief that all children deserve opportunities. With your commitment, together we help them realize Unlimited futures.

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## We're celebrating 25 years of youth development

Pledging your support helps us reach the next milestone.

A gift of just \$25 provides a student's uniform for Kids Unlimited Academy, fills a desk with school supplies or purchases an entire week of school lunches. It's generosity that makes an impact all year!

Donate \$250 to sponsor a class field trip, plant our school garden or fire our ceramics kiln. Contributions of \$2,500 support our sports teams and boost our scholarship fund for graduating high school seniors.

Go to [kuoregon.org/donate25](https://kuoregon.org/donate25) or scan this QR code:



Make it a recurring donation, and you help make the Unlimited possible!

## Peanut butter donations sustain kids through school vacations



A jar of peanut butter is a pantry staple that many households take for granted.

But for many kids who rely on school meals for their daily nutrition, peanut butter is a prized commodity, particularly during winter break. That's why Kids Unlimited, in partnership with Medford Rogue Rotary, has distributed thousands of jars of peanut butter over the past decade.

"It has been the simplest of gestures," said Tom Cole, KU founder and CEO. "But we realize a lot of our kids go hungry during the holiday times."

KU's food program in 2022 served more than 401,000 nutritious meals — each cooked from scratch using fresh ingredients in our on-site kitchen. All students at KU Academy public charter school are eligible for free breakfast, lunch and dinner, and the majority obtain most of their daily nutrition on our campus.

Dinner is delivered each school day to participants in KU afterschool programs at Medford's highest poverty elementary schools. Meals additionally are available during summer break.

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We know freshly prepared, nutrient-dense food is key to childhood growth and development. KU's nationally recognized, award-winning food program also incorporates nutrition education and gardening instruction into curricula and enrichment activities.

Because not all living arrangements are equipped for cooking, and not all households furnish regular meals, foods that kids can prepare themselves are even more important. Peanut butter donations by KU and local Rotarians often are augmented with fresh fruit and other ready-to-eat items.

Support our efforts with a donation returned to KU or pledged on our website.

Learn more at [kuoregon.org/food-program](http://kuoregon.org/food-program) or scan this QR Code:



## Household items, clothing lighten vulnerable families' burdens

Poverty is just one challenge that many Kids Unlimited families navigate daily. The holidays intensify the impacts of addiction, child foster care and personal tragedy.

"It also creates a lot of anxiety, a lot of stress; it compounds depression ... just for families who are struggling to keep their heads up," said Tom Cole, KU founder and CEO.

Easing financial and emotional burdens at Thanksgiving, KU furnishes fixings for about 100 family feasts. Stuffing, sweet potatoes, a pie and a gift card for protein — turkey or ham — are portioned to serve four to six people. Bags filled with other groceries help to bridge kids' nutritional gap over winter break.



"Food is a high, high need," said KU office manager Michelle Hull.

Clothing, household items and more spread holiday joy to KU's most vulnerable families, such as a single mom who worked with Oregon Department of Human Services to get her children out of foster care yet still co-parents with the former foster family. A single dad who battles substance use disorder is successfully parenting his five children, including two students at Kids Unlimited Academy, said Hull. KU supports "heavy-souled" teens carrying weights they never should at their age, said Cole.

"It's really important for us to normalize their adolescence in some ways."

The story that most moves Hull this year is of a family grieving their husband, father and primary wage earner. The man died less than two months after his first son was born.

Since the man's accidental death in March, his wife and children have moved three times, each time farther from the kids' school and mother's job in Medford. Gas cards would ease the financial strain on this newly single mother, who rents a low-income apartment in Talent. Cozy bedding, warm clothing and some toys would help to bring the three kids some comfort during the first holidays they've known without their father.

"It's been really difficult for her children — you can only imagine," said Yuritzi Carlos, KU human resources generalist, translator and interpreter.

A student in KU's pre-K program, the younger daughter has exhibited behavioral outbursts and conflicts with classmates since her father's death.

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“Everything revolved around her dad,” said Carlos, translating the 30-year-old mother’s narrative from Spanish.

The mother’s job in food service doesn’t come close to the father’s earnings from working in construction. After one of his shifts, to which he carpooled with co-workers from the Marshalls parking lot in Medford, the 31-year-old father was found dead in his car of an overdose. His widow said she never would have believed the cause was fentanyl if local authorities hadn’t told her.

“You’re talking about a great father, a good husband,” said Carlos, translating the mother’s insistence that she never had reason to suspect her husband of abusing controlled substances.



The family has lived for nearly a decade in Southern Oregon after immigrating from Mexico. The mother said she wants to speak out about the region’s fentanyl scourge in hopes of helping to save someone’s life and educating kids about the deadly drug.

Her two girls, 5 and 8, need twin-size sheets and bedding, clothing in children’s sizes 5/6 and 9/10 and tennis shoes in kids sizes 2 and 13. Both girls love Barbie dolls and Barbie-themed items. Their Christmas wish is for Santa to bring them a tablet for games and learning apps.

Their 9-month-old brother needs disposable diapers and clothing in sizes 18 months to 2T. He would enjoy age-appropriate educational toys, puzzles and books.

Reluctant to ask for anything for herself, the mother, who wears glasses, said she needs an eye exam.

To help this family, return our donation form or call KU at 541-774-3900.



## New KU classrooms are a gift to distressed Medford neighborhood

Kids Unlimited’s growing presence has been a beacon in a once-tarnished neighborhood.

A new building dedicated to education is KU’s latest gift to Medford’s Liberty Park area. The two-story structure with eight classrooms replaced a blighted residence on a 10,000-square-foot parcel. In addition to serving students at KU Academy public charter school, the facility serves the community with meeting spaces for parents and the KUA school board, whose regular sessions are open to the public.

“The footprint of Kids Unlimited has grown and improved the neighborhood,” said Tom Cole, KU founder and CEO.

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When KU brought its youth center to Liberty Park nearly two decades ago, the area was notorious throughout the state for its rates of crime, drug use and poverty. Removing barriers to education and empowering its participants – 80% Latinx, nearly all of whom are economically disadvantaged – KU has bettered the lives of youth, who have in turn, bettered their community.

The new classrooms will allow KUA to enroll another 200 students from its waiting list. Initiated in 2017, the project was funded with a generous foundation grant.



## KU 'angel' inspired scholarship fund

The generosity of Kid Unlimited's longtime board chairman lives on in a scholarship fund dedicated to his memory.

Selection is underway for the first recipients of "Charlie's Angels" scholarships, named for Chuck Martinez, who died July 28, 2022. The fund was established at KU's 25th anniversary gala auction. Donors attending the June 23 event raised their auction paddles to pledge amounts ranging from several hundred to several thousand dollars to benefit alumni of Kids Unlimited Academy.

The awards are open not only to students who are college-bound but also continuing their education through trade schools and apprenticeships, said KU CEO Tom Cole. Ranging in dollar amounts, awards will be based on need, he said, and take into account any other resources that prospective recipients may have.

KU alumni at the gala attested to Martinez's influence on their career pursuits and successes. Instrumental in the creation of KUA public charter school, said Cole, Martinez was a model of generosity, not only with his money, but his time and mentorship of KU youth.

"We are so grateful for the generosity of our donors to create Chuck's 'angels fund' to help scholarships for graduates of KU Academy. To know that they can be supported to take the next steps in college and career goals is really humbling."

To support the Charlie's Angels fund, go to [kuoregon.org/donate](https://kuoregon.org/donate) or scan the QR code:



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## Our staff share their gratitude

"I was visiting a doctor's office last week, and I met a lady working there who had once been part of the Kids Unlimited family. She saw my KUA polo and was so excited just to say thank you. She asked me to share how important Kids Unlimited was in her life and how she always felt welcomed here. She said it was a safe space and gave her confidence later in life, and now she is helping to pull her family out of generational poverty and giving her kids a better start than she had."

— *David Thygeson, MTSS Coordinator, KUA Medford Campus*



"This is a second family not just to our kids but to me, as well. The relationships and partnerships are some of the things that make it a badge of honor to be a part of this team. We do good work at KUA, and my heart is always full."

— *Tyrone McDonald, Behavior Coordinator, KUA Medford Campus*

"I am super thankful to all the staff who go out of their way to say 'hi/good morning' to me and ask how I am doing! For someone who always hesitates to say 'hi' first (shy, believe it or not lol), it really brightens my day!"

"I am thankful I get to build and do life with my husband, who is also my best friend."

"I am thankful to all the staff here who are willing to lend an extra helping hand and go above and beyond to help me when I need it. It takes us all to make the one!"

— *Tiani Bradford, KU Food Program Manager*



"I am thankful to work in an organization that is more than just a school. KU strives to create a safe haven for our working families no matter their situation. I am grateful to be part of a team committed to creating core memories for our families — loteria/ bingo night, March Madness and our winter holiday family night, just to name a few. What makes KU so special is the sense of belonging and being able to give back to a place that empowered me to dream big."

— *Lupita Vargas, KU Director of Educational Services*

"I'm thankful to have my 4-year-old in Pre-K here at KUA, where I can go say 'hi,' share lunches and just have a sense of closeness. I am also thankful for all the friendly faces every morning making KUA a safe, welcoming environment for ALL of us."

— *Elaina Lambert, English Language Development, KUA Medford Campus*



# Kids Unlimited Hope for the Holidays

## Who we are

Through empowering educational opportunities, Kids Unlimited prepares and inspires children to better themselves while bettering their communities.

Our focus on achieving equity for youth who face economic and cultural barriers forges their path toward high school graduation, college success and career readiness. We make these goals reasonable for all students – regardless of race, language, ethnicity, gender, economic status or zip code.

The longevity of our relationships with kids not only builds student confidence but also strengthens families. Ours is a comprehensive and holistic approach to programming and services – proven over decades of listening, learning and evolving.

- Nearly all of our participants experience poverty.
- More than 80% are from Latinx households, 56% of those non-English speaking.
- Nearly one-third of students attending KUA academies are designated migrant.

## What we do

- Serve kids year-round, bridging school, afterschool and summer services.
- Bring afterschool programs to 10 of the highest poverty elementary schools in our region, which includes the communities of Medford and White City.
- Operate two public charter schools recognized by Oregon Department of Education as two of the most diverse public schools in our state.

- Elevate the region's pre-K options with our focus on kindergarten readiness, socio-emotional development and hands-on, active learning, as well as wraparound support for families.
- Offer 10-hour structured school days that focus on increased instructional time and embedded enrichments in arts, music, culinary, sports and other programming often economically out of reach for our families.
- Employ highly qualified, diverse teaching staff, many bilingual, who offer culturally competent programming.
- Provide thousands of meals each day, all cooked from scratch, often incorporating locally sourced vegetables, produce and proteins.
- Leverage youth sports programs as incentives for academic achievement, known as "pass to play."

## Why we need you

Kids Unlimited is a nonprofit organization that relies on foundation grants, private donations, business sponsorships, community partnerships and government allocations. We are and always have been committed to cultivating relationships that can financially sustain our programs.

Offering "free" services removes our participants' economic and cultural barriers to ensure their access and equity. There's no magic formula for sustaining our model. But we know when we do meaningful work and achieve desired outcomes, we secure a following that generates funding.

# Help us make a difference in 2024

Please send your donation by check today, or donate online at [kuoregon.org/donate](https://kuoregon.org/donate)

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Amount I am donating today: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

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