

MAKING A DIFFERENCE

# Holiday House SRQ

Spreading Holiday Cheer and Essential Support



**HOLIDAY HOUSE SRQ:** Bringing Joy to Students at Title I Schools A cherished holiday tradition will continue to bring joy and wonder to local students this year! Started in 2021 by founders Sepi Ackerman and Jenny Infanti, **Holiday House SRQ** is a non-profit organization dedicated to creating a magical holiday experience for students at Title I schools, offering them the opportunity to select gifts for themselves and loved ones at no cost. After transforming a portion of the school into a festive wonderland, the children select five gifts for themselves, their family members or even pets- completely free of charge.

Beyond creating this enchanting gift shop, Holiday House SRQ has made it a mission to meet some of the schools' most pressing needs. Past initiatives have included providing a new pair of sneakers to every student at Alta Vista, eliminating school lunch debt, and ensuring homeless families have necessities to last them during the winter break. While the inaugural event was held at Emma E. Booker Elementary, Holiday House SRQ has since expanded to Wilkinson, Alta Vista, and now in its 4th year, Brentwood Elementary.

Due to growing interests from schools, Holiday House SRQ secured its non-profit status in 2024 allowing it to accept tax deductible donations and pursue grant funding to expand its outreach. Donations come from individuals, family trusts, and organizations. Early support came from key partners such as **Junior League of Sarasota** and the **Community Foundation of Sarasota County's Programmatic Grant**, both who played a critical role in ensuring sustainability and growth of the organization.

From December 9-12, 2024, volunteers will transform these schools into a winter wonderland, providing students with a magical holiday experience. Preparation for Holiday House is an enormous undertaking as shopping for over 10,000 presents occurs all year leading into the week of the event which requires multiple spaces to be set up simultaneously across the schools. Approximately 500 kids at each school attend Holiday House over a three-day period. "This event is meant to be an experience and it is important to us that no child feels rushed," says Ackerman. "Even as they are waiting for their turns to enter into the shopping space, we have activities that keep

the wait magical, too." Students can participate in holiday crafts, listen to festive music and eat holiday-themed treats until it is their turn to shop. Infanti reflects on the impact: "It's been incredibly heartwarming to witness the joy this event brings. We are thrilled not only to have sustained this initiative at the schools we've served in the past but also to expand it to a new one this year. We are grateful for big and small donors, it all adds up."

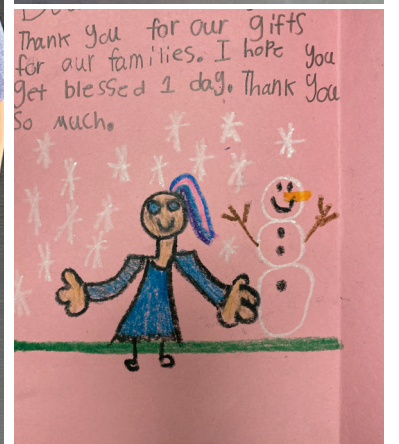
The mission is clear: Together with their community, they create exceptional holiday experiences and provide needed resources at Title I Elementary Schools.

If you'd like to join in and support this heartwarming project, please consider donating or signing up to volunteer the week of the event. No contribution is too small, and the happiness it brings is immeasurable. This initiative not only embodies the spirit of the holiday season but also serves as a beautiful example of how a community can come together to make a difference in the lives of those who need it most.

Please visit [www.holidayhousesrq.org](http://www.holidayhousesrq.org) for more information.



Board Members Shera Friedman, Jenny Infanti, and Sepi Ackerman



Together with our community, we create *exceptional holiday experiences* and provide *needed resources* at Title I elementary schools.

Hi, My Name is Valery. Thank you so much you are so generous, after all it is the season of giving! 🎁

THANK YOU

[holidayhousesrq.org](http://holidayhousesrq.org)