About three years ago, around Thanksgiving, one of our donors stopped by and handed me a $100 bill. She said, “Surprise someone in need with this.”

At that time, there was a crossing guard I would see every morning when I came to work at the intersection by Bishop Sullivan Center. We typically waved to each other when I parked. Thinking of the $100 surprise, I stopped to visit with her. I learned that she was 62 years old and was struggling financially; she was about to be evicted if she didn’t come up with some money.

After hearing her story, I knew she was the one who should receive the $100. I came in the office and asked a co-worker to videotape the exchange so I could show the donor.

When I gave this woman the $100, she was stunned. She immediately broke down in tears and said, “I guess God does love me.”

With her permission, we shared the video with others and people started sending in $100 bills for us to go out and surprise more people. (You can still see this video on our website.)

So, following the example of Kansas City’s “Secret Santa,” we surprised people in this neighborhood waiting at bus stops and at laundromats.

**Surprising someone in need with a gift that they don’t expect is one of the main messages of Christmas.** God surprised humans with a gift they didn’t expect - his own Son in human form. So stunning a gift, we still celebrate it today.

Even though that event happened over 2,000 years ago, I am sure that you can think of at least one time in your life **when you received an unexpected gift at a time when you really needed it.** As a friend of mine likes to say, “It is not a ‘coincidence’ but a ‘God-incidence,’” that is, a direct intervention by God. “All good things come from above” (James 1:17).

**I believe God continues to surprise us with good things.**

As we enjoy the spirit of Christmas I want to thank you for your generosity to help people in need. Besides helping them with a basic need like food or gas or lights, it reminds them of the presence of God. As the crossing guard exclaimed when she got her surprise gift, “I guess God really does love me.”
The State of Missouri, in its effort to support people in need of food, offers a tax credit – better than a mere deduction – to any Missouri tax filer who donates money to a food pantry in Missouri. Bishop Sullivan Center operates two large food pantries, and therefore, donations here qualify.

The state has set aside a little more than a million dollars to give back to such donors. According to the Missouri Department of Revenue website, “Any taxpayer (individual, corporation, or trust) that makes a donation of cash or food supplies to a food pantry may receive a credit of up to $2,500 per taxpayer per year. The taxpayer may take a credit of 50 percent of their donations.” For more details, go to www.bishopsullivan.org/missouri-tax-credit or consult your tax advisor.

Each month, more than 1,000 families come to one of our two food pantries.

**Thank You Notes**

Here are a few handwritten thank you notes from people that you helped.

**Tax Credits Available for Donations to Bishop Sullivan Center**

Follow us on social media to keep up with the Center, learn about whom we serve and see the difference your support makes.

MARK YOUR CALENDAR: March 4, 2017, at the Sheraton Kansas City Hotel at Crown Center

Time to Round Up Your Gang and Come to Bishop Sullivan Center’s Annual Auction and Trivia Night!