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Orthodox relief service collects $81,500, 13,500 gifts for needy for Christmas

Thanks to its 10th annual "Give Joy for Christmas" campaign, the Mercy Orthodox relief service of the Moscow Patriarchate's Synodal Department for Church Charity and Social Services was able to raise more than $81,500 to purchase more than 13,000 Christmas gifts for the needy.

Altogether, $81,660 (6 million rubles)—twice as much as last year—was donated for the purchase of 13,500 gifts for orphans, lonely elderly people, seriously ill children and adults, the homeless, and those in need, reports the site of the [Russian Orthodox Church](#).

Over the 10 years of the program, 282,000 gifts have been provided altogether. The remaining funds after the purchase of gifts this year will go to the general needs of those under the care of the Mercy service.

"It is a great joy to see people coming together to help those in need, especially at this difficult time of year," commented Svetlana Shepel, the organizer of the "Give

Joy for Christmas" program.

As Shepel explained, the campaign involves both individual donors and companies. One company donated $2,450 for a wheelchair for a child with cerebral palsy, and another organization donated musical instruments and educational toys for children.

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