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MN GEEKS & NERDS MOBILIZE FOR UNIQUE GRASSROOTS HOLIDAY DRIVE

30 Local Businesses and Organizations Participating

The local news and culture website *Twin Cities Geek* is currently working with local businesses and organizations in and around the Twin Cities metro to collect donations for the second annual Twin Cities Geek Holiday Toy & Book Drive. All new and gently used items donated will go to support the families served by the Hallie Q. Brown Community Center, a nonprofit social service agency in the Summit-University area of St. Paul, and the Women's Prison Book Project, a national effort based out of the Seward neighborhood in Minneapolis that provides female and transgender inmates with free reading materials.

The drive launched on November 12, 2016, and runs through December 15. It is an entirely grassroots initiative, but that does not mean it's small. Donation boxes are being hosted by 30 local business and organizations who support and facilitate Minnesota's diverse arts and geek communities, including comic-book stores, collectible stores, game stores, and more. The full list and a map of participating businesses and organizations are available at www.TwinCitiesGeek.com/ToyDrive.

There is a reason the Twin Cities are regularly called out as one of the most geek- and nerd-friendly places in the country. Not only are there a lot of self-identifying geeks and nerds (people who are enthusiastic about a subject, typically one of specialist or minority interest) in the area, but they enjoy an incredibly organized community. For instance, did you know there are over 25 sci-fi, fantasy, anime, horror, gaming, and comic conventions in Minnesota annually? And with all of the geek-owned-and-operated organizations and businesses that are running events and engaging the community every week of the year, that really is the tip of the iceberg. Geeks and nerds are a very significant subculture in the area, and like Spider-Man's uncle Ben says, "With great power comes great responsibility." The Twin Cities Geek Holiday Toy & Book Drive is something huge on the scene to help make a difference.

About Twin Cities Geek

Twin Cities Geek is an online culture magazine for the self-identifying geek community in Minnesota, particularly focused around the Twin Cities area. It is the goal of *Twin Cities Geek* to provide online spaces where topics important to members of MN geek communities can be discussed in fun, constructive, responsible, and impactful ways. To learn more, visit www.twincitiesgeek.com, or email us at admin@twincitiesgeek.com.

Quotes

Hal Bichel, editor-in-chief, Twin Cities Geek:

"The drive was sort of born out of nothing at the really last minute last year [December 2015] when I heard from the Hallie Q. Brown center that they were short on donated gifts for teenagers. I thought, well, we can do something about that, and I called around and put together a drive in a couple days and got the message out to the Twin Cities Geek community. We added the book part of the drive because so many people clear out their bookshelves at this time of year, so it was just natural for us to collect for that at the same time. Last year's drive, being such a last-minute operation, was just a fraction the size of this year's drive, so doing it on this scale with time to plan and do outreach is really something new. What really struck me is when I contacted many of these local small businesses and organizations—most of which are hosts to vibrant communities of their own—the majority of them said nobody had ever asked them to be part of a charity drive before, and they were really enthusiastic to participate. We are lucky to have so many awesome small business owners as the connective tissue in the Twin Cities Geek community. And it's fun to watch all of this in action as people post about their donations on the #GiveTCG hashtag."

Ben Mueller, 2016 Twin Cities Geek Holiday Drive volunteer:

"I always knew the importance of gift drives this time of year, and I always try to give what I can. When I heard that *Twin Cities Geek* was doing a drive, I wanted to help as much as I could. Geekdom was very formative for me growing up, and I want to help get those connections to a child who otherwise might not have the opportunity"

Emilie Peck, 2016 Twin Cities Geek Holiday Drive volunteer:

"I wanted to get more involved with helping my community. After signing up [to help with the drive], I saw the helping women in prison aspect, and was doubly glad I did. Literacy is one of the biggest factors in rebuilding lives. The greater hope I can contribute in a struggling world, the better."

Lisa Olson, comic-book specialist, the Source Comics and Games:

"The initiative and organization of *Twin Cities Geek* is what got us involved. We work with several charitable groups throughout the year because we are our community and the community is us. Source Comics and Games wouldn't exist without that fantastic community, and we're lucky that it's a generous, passionate community that gives us opportunities to participate in things like this. We see the transformational power of games and comics in people's lives over months and years, and if we can help to spread those tools and opportunities to people who really need them it really does make the grind and hard work running a shop feel like a great privilege. And, you know, great power, great responsibility."

Corrie Dubay, owner, Midwest Makeup Supply:

"I believe in paying it forward and giving back to the community—because we've all fallen on hard times before. I generally can't afford to make monetary donations, but that doesn't mean I still can't help in some way, shape, or form. I also believe that oftentimes actions, words, and gratitude are way more valuable and can make more of an impact than any dollar amount I can donate."

Jonathan Palmer, executive director, Hallie Q. Brown Community Center:

"This holiday season, hundreds of families across the metro are going to be happy. Parents who are struggling to make ends meet, who are unemployed or underemployed, who live in impoverished communities are going to have a bright ray of hope and joy because they will get to see their kids smile and laugh, and we have the geek community to thank for that. All of these wonderful businesses and organizations coming together with *Twin Cities Geek* to make a difference in the lives of people in need—this is what the holidays are all about. These people are heroes."

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