WRIGHT Hennepin Electric Trust

Please **type** or **print** information requested.

Name of Organization: Best Christmas Ever

Address: PO Box 439

Street or PO Box

Cloquet MN 55720

City State Zip

Phone Number: (218) 451-2378

Work Home

Contact Person: Don Liimatainen President & CEO

1. Email: [Don@donliimatainen.com](mailto:Don@donliimatainen.com)
2. Describe briefly the nature of your org: for example, food shelf, youth program, shelter, educational program, Senior Center.

Best Christmas Ever (BCE) brings generosity and hope to Minnesota families who receive a personalized experience including not just wrapped gifts, but also additional support that can impact their lives for the long term. We have helped pay mortgages, buy cars, and even pay for a medical dog. After Christmas ends, our relationship with families continues as we also provide financial education and wellness programs – including helping families pay down debt and providing basic needs food support.

1. State purpose of organization/agency request: (Include amount requested and specifics of how funds from WHET will be used.)
   1. Total: $2,000

Through the years, BCE has tied the community and businesses together to fulfill a dream gift list for a local family that has fallen on hard times. The process begins with a nomination from a concerned friend, family member, or community member. Once a family is selected, the nominator works closely with team captains to make the experience personal for the family and their circumstances.

BCE volunteers find and collaborate with a local business willing to help a nominated family who doesn’t know they've been selected. Businesses like Orange Theory or Jerry’s Foods put cards with gift ideas on a Christmas tree located within the business. Customers then buy the gifts and return them to the business unwrapped.

The average value of a BCE experience is $10,000 and doesn’t just include items that you can put under the tree. Each team brings 10 gifts per family and at least $5,000 for a life-changing gift. Items such as a new furnace, medical equipment, a mortgage payment, or a new washer/dryer might be included. Once all of the items and services are ready, the nominator and the BCE team surprises the family by arriving on their doorstep ready to provide the Best Christmas Ever.

BCE works with families who are nominated because they are in the midst of personal and financial crises. Our relationship with BCE families doesn’t end when Christmas does. We also offer provide skills training for health and wellbeing. To help families manage what money they have, and to help them acquire knowledge and skills to make good financial decisions, we offer a free financial literacy course. Families develop a plan to maximize limited resources. Once they complete the course, they are given an additional $1,000 grant to help them pay down existing debt.

When a family is struggling financially and may be experiencing the stress of caregiving or job loss, healthy living and healthy eating can take a backseat. BCE offers an 8-week Total Wellness Health program that focuses on how to live a healthy lifestyle and teaches wellness principles for the whole family. All adults in the household attend all 8 weeks of training. After completion of the 8-week course, families receive $1,000 in gift cards (e.g. Cub, Hyvee, Lunds/Byerlys) to be used toward the purchase of fresh, healthy food.

Financial crises, especially when caused by a major health event or other life circumstance, can affect any family at any time. Many of the families that are nominated for Best Christmas Ever have suffered from a family member’s catastrophic illness. BCE helps fill the gap for families who are living paycheck to paycheck but do not qualify or do not apply for social services programs.

1. Is organization requesting funding exempt from payment of income tax: Yes **X** No\_\_\_

If yes, a copy of letter (Form 501 (c) 3) from Internal Revenue Service must be attached.

1. A copy of financial statement(s) for most previous year should be provided. **Attached**
2. Federal EIN# 46-4729005
3. If your organization currently files a Form 990, please give the amounts for the following information directly from the 990 regarding expenses.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Program Service | $914,866 |  | Management & General | $20,286 |
| Fundraising | $32,628 |  | Total Expenses | $967,780 |

If you organization does not file Form 990 please list the administrative expense in a dollar amount and percentage as well as what percentage and dollar amount is for direct service of your clients.

10. Can you or your parent organization or governmental unit levy taxes: No

11. Does your organization sell pull tabs or have a license to engage in charitable gambling? No

If so, how much do you earn? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

1. List other sources of funding for use of request as described in the above

To sustain our programs, we actively solicit funding from foundations, corporations, businesses, and individuals. We typically hold an annual fundraising gala event that will not be held this year due to COVID-19. Instead, we are conducting a new, remote initiative to help fund operations and program services. We created *The North Pole Fund* which engages our leaders in a new giving plan. This effort leverages key funding relationships and encourages incremental giving. The Board of Directors is participating in this effort. Additionally, our captains have a goal to personally fundraise $5,000 each.

1. How many people are within 60% and outside 40% of the Wright Hennepin Service Territory will benefit from this project and in what way? Please be specific.

There are 372 individuals (93 families) in Hennepin/Wright counties that will benefit from BCE’s life-changing Christmas experience and ongoing programs.

14. Please list three contacts familiar with this application or project who could be contacted to provide additional information (Do not include a director form either Wright Hennepin Cooperative Electric Board or the Trust Board.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Don Liimatainen | | | 218-499-1342 | |
| Name |  | | Phone |  |
|  |  | |  |  |
| Address | City | | State | Zip |
| BJ Lingren | | | 218-310-6590 | |
| Name |  | | Phone |  |
|  |  | |  |  |
| Address | City | | Stat | Zip |
| Ole Hovde | | | 612-916-3566 | |
| Name | |  | Phone |  |
|  | |  |  |  |
| Address | | City | State | Zip |

**The information contained in this statement for the purpose of boating funding from the Wright-Hennepin Electric Trust on behalf of the undersigned. Each undersigned understands that the information provided herein is used in deciding grant funding, and each undersigned represents and warrants that the information is true and complete and that the Wright-Hennepin Electric Trust may consider this statement as continuing to be true and correct until a written notice of a change is provided. The Wright Hennepin Electric Trust is authorized to make all inquiries they deem necessary to verify the accuracy of the statements made herein.**

Applications must be signed or approved by the unit/organizations president prior to submission.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | Best Christmas Ever |
|  |  |
|  |  |
|  |  |
|  | SIGNATURE OF REPRESENTATIVE |
|  | *Don Liimatainen*  September 28, 2020 |
|  | DATE |