



**The Ann Arbor Police Department
Washtenaw County Sheriff's &
Saline Police Department**

Debbie Williams-Hoak

ADOPT-A-FAMILY PROGRAM



In 1996, Ann Arbor Professional Golfer and former LPGA Tour player Debbie Williams-Hoak approached the Ann Arbor Police Department about helping her realize a life long dream. Growing up, Debbie had some very bad Christmas experiences and made her mind up that when she got older, she was going to do something for children and make their Christmas special.

The Ann Arbor Police Department had an Adopt-A-Family program in place where they helped one family each year. Debbie wanted to make it much bigger and together a partnership was formed that will celebrate its 14th anniversary in 2009. Individuals from the Washtenaw county area join with many local businesses and organizations to make this a very successful and gratifying program. Officers Dawn King, Jamie Adkins, Elizabeth Cornell along with Sgt. Tom Hickey are Santa's main helpers from the Ann Arbor Police Department. 2009 welcomes the addition of the Saline Police Department and Washtenaw County Sheriff's Department.

Each year, the police departments receive "wish lists" from deserving children. These lists are obtained through the principals in schools, area churches, social work organizations and from police officers who become aware of families in need. From these "wish lists" Santa's Christmas list is formed. People helping with the program have the option to donate money, buy one of the gifts that a child has asked for or adopt the entire family. This makes it very special for those involved as donors know who they are buying for and what the child received.

Another special and important part of this program is that the police officers deliver the toys to the children in uniform. The children are told that the officers are some of Santa's helpers. What better way to help create a positive view of police officers in the eyes of children than to associate them with Santa.

Since the program started, close to 550 families and well over 2,700 children have had a special Christmas thanks to the generosity of so many people. For Debbie, who has many sports achievements, "This is the greatest reward to come from my sports career." For the police departments involved, they all agree that this is a tremendous community event that they are very proud to be part of. Both Debbie and the police departments hope the program is around for a long time.