

Start giving Christmas presents to kids

Indya Clayton

indya.clayton@newsquest.co.uk

A FUNDRAISING organisation has launched its festive appeal where people can donate gifts to children who are less fortunate.

Sleigh2Give is Play2Give's Christmas campaign calling for the public to give to children who might not otherwise receive presents this year.

The man behind the campaign is 31-year-old Andrew Baker who set-up Play2Give in 2007.

He fought for his life in the Special Care Baby Unit at the John Radcliffe and again when he was 12 after brain surgery, and so fundraising for local charities has become an important part of his life.

Around £70,000 worth of gifts have been donated through the Sleigh2Give appeal since its birth in 2015, and last year saw the biggest record gift appeal yet.

Mr Baker hopes people will be fully on-board again this time round.

He said: "Every September I launch my festive spin-off which is all about increasing giving through the warmth of gifts that bring cheer, joy and smiles in abundance to a large number of people every

Christmas.

"It's all about ensuring that those less privileged, for example young carers, those confined to their hospital beds, the youngest of patients, families who may struggle to afford a present for their children and others, all benefit through the generosity of a gift.

"Whether it's a new toy, a book, a DVD, a soft toy, arts and crafts to something for teenagers, we ensure we spread the love of goodwill and kindness to so many across the festive season."

People can also donate money which will be used to buy gifts especially for those age groups that can be more difficult to buy for.

News of the appeal has travelled in the past with gifts coming from as far as Gloucester last year.

Mr Baker added: "[It] just shows our appeal is now spreading out the cheer, joy and smiles to a much wider area, and I continue to be grateful for each and every single person, company and school who continue to get behind this special appeal."

People can drop off their presents at various locations across Oxfordshire.

Didcot Civic Hall is acting as an official drop off point for the first time with a donation box across three weeks starting from November 30.

Other places include, Tesco Didcot from November 15-17, Sainsbury's



Play2Give launch festive appeal for people to donate toys to children in need this Christmas. Pic by Jon Lewis.

Heyford Hill from November 6, Sainsbury's Didcot from December 1 and Didcot Street Fair (P2G stall) on November 28.

Play2Give supports a number of charities in the county such as Ronald McDonald House Charities, Be Free Young Carers and Headway Oxfordshire.

Last month Play2Give held its first superhero walk where volunteers walked for 12 hours dressed as superheroes from Didcot to John Radcliffe Hospital to raise money for Oxford Children's Hospital.

Other fundraising events that have taken place in the past include charity football matches, a super-

hero spinathon and family fun days.

Mr Baker was recently a runner-up in ITV Meridian's Fundraiser of the Year as part of the Pride of Britain Awards.

In July he became an ambassador for the British Citizen Awards, after being honoured with a BCA medal in July 2017.