

Thursday, Dec. 12, 2013

## World-Record Secret Santa Reaches USU Community

The Student Life section of *Utah State Today* highlights work written by the talented student journalists at Utah State University. Each week, the editor selects a story that has been published in *The Utah Statesman* or the *Hard News Café* or both for inclusion in *Utah State Today*.

### World-Record Secret Santa Reaches USU Community

By [Morgan Pratt, Utah Statesman](#), Monday, November 25, 2013

Students at USU are getting into the Christmas spirit by participating in the world's largest Secret Santa.

Reddit.com shattered its previous world record of 44,000 participants in the holiday tradition with 122,000 Secret Santas from 163 different countries. This met and surpassed the social news site's original goal to have 100,000 people sign up this year.

Kaylynn Kimball, a sophomore, participated in the gift exchange two years ago. The event works by signing up and getting matched with someone and secretly buying Christmas present for them.

"You go to their Reddit page, and you see what they're interested in and things like that," Kimball said. "The more you read into it, the more likely you're going to find something that they want to have."

With a minimum purchase of \$20, participants buy a gift and send it in the mail by Dec. 20. The presents then arrive just in time to be opened on Christmas morning. The presents, received on Christmas, can be serious or funny, ranging from music albums to bicycles, from books to toys and more.

“Some people go all out — I’ve seen people get laptops from complete strangers,” Kimball said. “I also saw one where someone had a hard time paying their bills and someone gave them \$500 dollar gift cards to Walmart to feed their family.”

In 2012, a Reddit marketplace opened specifically for Secret Santas where participants spent an estimated \$2 million on presents and shipping and handling on gifts.

Reddit’s Secret Santa was inspired by a TED Talk given by Michael Norton, an associate professor of business administration at Harvard, entitled “How to Buy Happiness.” His presentation was on how people who spend money on others tend to be happier than people who spend money on themselves.

“If you think money can’t buy happiness, you’re not spending it right,” Norton said. “People who spent money on other people got happier. People who spent money on themselves, didn’t make them less happy, it just didn’t do much for them.”

After watching this presentation in 2009, Reddit user /u/kickme444 said he felt moved by the TED Talk and he started the world’s first online Secret Santa.

“I signed up for the fun of it, because I like the idea of giving gifts to someone.” said Kevin Beutler, a junior.

USU students aren’t the only ones participating in this year’s gift exchange. Celebrities like Paul Reubens, American Idol’s James Durbin, Arnold Schwarzenegger, Sugar Ray’s Mark Mcgrath, Shaq and Bill Gates will also be Secret Santas this Christmas.

The deadline to sign up for Reddit’s Secret Santa was Dec. 1. Participants were matched up with their Secret Santas on Dec. 2.