

Jeff is an integral part of our maintenance department at Altru Health System, the lead agency for Safe Kids Grand Forks. From his time spent on staff, Jeff has come into contact with many of Safe Kids' tips and messages. One of the messages that Jeff caught wind of several years ago was to think outside the box when giving someone a gift (e.g. give your child a bike but also give them a helmet). Jeff took this message to



heart one Christmas when he chose to give his brother-in-law and sister-in-law from Walhalla, ND a carbon monoxide detector for their home. It was a thoughtful gift, simple, but it conveyed great care for the couple and their two children. After the Christmas festivities had ended, the family's new carbon monoxide detector made its way to a closet shelf in their home. It remained there, unnoticed, for the next 11 months. It was eleven months later when this gift saw the light of day once again. Over Thanksgiving weekend, Jeff's brother-in-law had the inclination to try out that carbon monoxide detector for the first time. He had barely plugged it into the outlet, and the alarm started to sound. The beeping was persistent. Puzzled by this he called up his brother-in-law, Jeff. Jeff showed concern and advised his brother-in-law to call for help. It was unlikely that there was a defect with the detector, and it was better to have the house checked than to ignore a potentially life-threatening issue. After getting off the phone, Jeff's brother-in-law placed the call to his local Fire Department. They quickly came out to his home to assess the situation. After sizing up the scene, Jeff's brother-in-law was informed that their old furnace was indeed emitting toxic levels of carbon monoxide. The levels were so high that had they gone undetected, the entire family, including their two small children, stood a good chance of dying in their sleep. Because of the high levels of carbon monoxide, their house was condemned, having been deemed unsafe. He and his family would not be permitted to enter their home again until the issue was resolved. This was both chilling and shocking news to their family. They were so grateful to have received that simple gift – a carbon monoxide detector – almost a full year before. Carbon monoxide has no color or odor. If it were not for that simple gift, they would have no way of knowing that their home was filling with toxic gas. Thanks to Jeff's willingness to think outside the box with his gift giving, his family will be able to celebrate many more Christmases together.

As you go about your Christmas shopping, keep Jeff's story in mind. Make sure that your loved ones' well-being is secured, and consider giving a gift of safety to your friends and family. In the case of Jeff's family, the gift of safety meant the gift of life, and that truly is the best gift one can receive. Our wish at Safe Kids Grand Forks is that you and your family have a very safe and merry Christmas!

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**KIDS**  
GRAND FORKS