

BayArea.com & Mercury News Online

HOLIDAY WishBook

2002 Holiday Wish Book - Heartfelt thanks to our readers

Wish 1

The Xenos family has stayed close during their troubles.



[Wish Book Home](#)

Thanks to Mercury News readers, all of the wishes in the 2002 Holiday Wish Book will be fulfilled. Links to details below:

★ **Family**

[Food & Shelter](#)

[Education](#)

[Hope](#)

[Make an online donation](#)

[About Wish Book](#)

[Contact us](#)

[Email this Wish Book story to a friend](#)

Published Sunday, November 24, 2002, in the San Jose Mercury News

THE WISH: FURNITURE FOR THE KIDS' ROOMS, TOYS, CLOTHES, ARTS OPPORTUNITIES

Jobless parents need help while re-training

"The hardest thing about our situation is worrying about finances," Alexandra Xenos says. At 14, the high school freshman with the angelic face and the wavy red-gold hair thinks about her parents' mortgage, her little brothers' need for new clothes and the future jobs she hopes her mom and dad will find. The concerns of her adolescent peers -- makeup, boys and music -- seem a distant world when you aren't sure where the next meal is coming from.

Since July, both Damien Xenos, 43, and his wife, Liza, 33, have been without an income. Laid off from their jobs at a non-profit agency, they have been struggling to make the mortgage payment on their small Cupertino house, while caring for four children.

Alexandra is a great student who loves to sing, but she dropped out of the Cupertino High School choir this fall when she knew

her family couldn't afford the cost of the dress she needed to perform in or the travel money to join the group at its performances out of the area.

Nikolas, 10, and Tyler, 9, are growing fast and need new clothes, and little Dakota, 20 months, goes through diapers fast. Even though times are hard right now, the family isn't despairing. Liza is back in school, studying to get a nursing degree. Damien -- a former Green Beret and Gulf War veteran -- is enrolled at De Anza College while he looks for an immediate job in administration.

"We've always been the ones giving, not asking for help," says Liza, who is a long-time volunteer. "This is a learning experience. We are still very thankful for what we have."

With emotional support and counseling help from Project UPLIFT, a mental health program of EMQ Children & Family Services in San Jose, the Xenoses have held their family together and remained close. But a few things would certainly make life easier. Two sets of bunk beds (\$500 each) (**1A**) would allow each child to sleep alone. A dresser (\$180) (**1B**), bookshelves (\$75) (**1C**) and a toy box (\$50) (**1D**) would give them a place to put things away in their tiny living space. Some toys for the boys -- especially Legos (\$25 for a 576-brick pack) (**1E**) -- would be great. Gift certificates (\$25 each) (**1F**) would allow the family to shop for warm clothing.

Alexandra would love to rejoin her school choir. The school can help with some of the fees, but she needs that dress (\$80) (**1G**). And next summer, she'd love to sing and dance with the Children's Musical Theater San Jose program called COPA -- Conservatory of the Performing Arts. A scholarship to one of its three-week sessions costs \$350 (**1H**), including costume fees. A bus pass to get her there is \$20 (**1I**).

For more information on [EMQ Children & Family Services](http://www.emq.org), go to www.emq.org.

[[Review Your Wish Book Donation](#)]

★ [back](#)

[next](#) ★



© 2002 San Jose Mercury News. The information you receive online from the San Jose Mercury News is protected by the copyright laws of the United States. The copyright laws prohibit any copying, redistributing, retransmitting, or repurposing of any copyright protected material.

▶ **KNIGHT RIDDER** ▶

INFORMATION FOR LIFE