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## "Shop with a Cop" Event Shows True Christmas Spirit

The children who took part in the "Shop with a Cop" program in Perris rounded up the usual gifts during a Dec. 15 visit to Wal-Mart in the City.

The shopping lists included footballs and soccer balls, Nintendo 3DS and other video-gaming systems, candy, toy trains and Hot Wheels, hair brushes, and beauty supplies, slippers and blouses, flashlights and trousers.

But for most of the kids, the shopping list wasn't for themselves. Mom and dad, sisters and brothers, cousins and neighbors came first. That sentiment touched the hearts of Perris Police Sgt. Tim Elwell, who coordinated the third annual "Shop with a Cop" event in the City. Elwell said law officers worked with churches and schools to identify deserving children to take on the holiday shopping trip.

Funding for the shopping excursion came from a \$1,000 gift from the City of Perris and contributions from Wal-Mart and individual police officers. Each child received \$100.

"This trip makes Christmas for these kids," Elwell said. "What's really neat about it is that they want to shop for their brothers and sisters and parents first. It melts your heart. It's a great sight."

Perris Mayor Daryl Busch said the City is "pleased and proud" to take part in the Shop With a Cop effort.

"It provides a great service to families who really need it," he said. "Everybody wins in that situation. You can't go wrong."

The children gathered at Perris Police Headquarters early Sunday morning, dropped off by their parents. They were met by 30 police officers who volunteered their time to serve as personal shoppers for the kids. Each youngster rode in a squad car—lights flashing and sirens blaring—to Wal-Mart where they were met by store employees who also donated their time. Along the way, several motorists flashed thumbs up signs as the procession past.

Officer Rene Montes accompanied Ayden Medina, 6, on the store visit. At 6-feet 6-inches, Montes made a striking contrast with Ayden as they walked hand-in-hand to pick out gifts. Ayden chose a doll for his sister, a football for his brother and a Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtle for himself.

The little guy declared his bug buddy was a good helper when it came to shopping and selecting.

Emma Dornay, 6, spent \$4.96 on a blanket, \$10 on a basketball for her brother, \$12 for a pair of slippers and also purchased the Christmas movie "Santa Buddies" for her family to watch. Mom and grandma each got necklaces.

Rachelle Brock, 11, didn't let a broken leg stop her from shopping. She did her gift-buying in a motorized cart. She picked up body lotion for mom, hygiene products for her brother, toy trains for her cousin and a gift card for a favorite teacher. She succinctly summed up her thoughts on the shopping excursion.

"I can buy anything I want," Rachelle said.

After finishing up at Wal-Mart, kids and cops took a ride out to the Perris Valley Airport for a barbecue lunch before returning to police headquarters to wrap presents. Police helped out there too, taking time to cut, tape, tie and write out greeting cards for each recipient.

The kids weren't the only happy folks at the end of the day. Parents, grandparents and guardians also left smiling.

Vanessa Deshazer said her grandson, Dillion, 9, was counting down the days before the shopping trip. When he woke up early Sunday morning, he announced, "today is the day," she said.

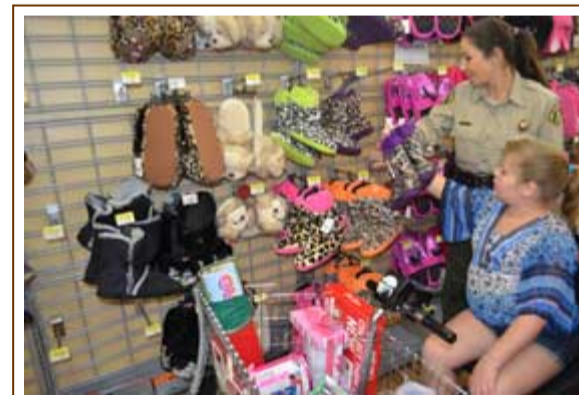
"I think this is absolutely wonderful," Vanessa Deshazer said. "I just wanted him to enjoy his day and he sure has. For police officers to do this on their own time is just great. I can't get over it."



Perris Police Sgt. Gil Gonzalez and Isaac Quintana, 6, prepare to head to Wal-Mart for a shopping spree as part of the Dec. 15 "Shop With a Cop" program.



Perris Police officer Rene Montes helps Ayden Medina, 6, with his selections during the "Shop with the Cop" program.



Using a motorized shopping cart, Rachelle Brock, 11, contemplates a selection of winter foot-ware during the Dec. 15 shopping excursion. Helping out is police officer Megan Reynolds. .



Police Sgt. Scott Forbes helps Brian Paul, 9, wrap a gift at Perris Police Headquarters.