



## Perris News

Contact: Joe Vargo, Perris Public Information Officer  
Phone: 951-956-2120  
[jvargo@cityofperris.org](mailto:jvargo@cityofperris.org)

### Christmas Comes Early for Children at Homeless Shelter

Christmas came early for 135 children at two homeless shelters Monday as members of the March Joint Powers Authority delivered toys, bicycles, clothing and other holiday gifts in an annual celebration that drew plenty of smiles, laughter and a few tears.

Perris City Councilman Mark Yarbrough, whose duties also include setting policy for the March JPA, praised the agency staff for raising more than \$4,000 to purchase presents. Some JPA employees adopted individual families this Christmas.

Yarbrough helped deliver gifts to the needy children, who ranged from two months to 18 years and are living at Path of Life Ministries and Amelia's Light shelter.

"This organization continues to demonstrate why it's a cut above others," he said. "They are not here because they have to be or because they feel sorry for anyone. They are here because they want to be. They are here to share the spirit of the holidays."

JPA executive director led her staff at Monday's holiday gift giving. She said the agency received more contributions this year than it ever has since it began the gift-giving program six years ago. There was enough money to purchase outdoor gifts like bicycles, hula hoops, basketballs and hoops besides the clothing and individual toys.

"People have been very generous, even in this difficult time," said Stone, who put on a Santa cap as she helped Santa hand out gifts.

Major donations came from Riverside County Supervisors Marion Ashley and Bob Buster and from the JPA's landscaper, Bemus Landscaping. The money purchased enough goodies to fill two vans.

Dozens of children and their parents were waiting when Santa arrived Monday morning.

Reyna Munoz came with her four children—Seline, 9; Fernando, 7; Naedine, 3 and Jimmy, 1. She said she would not have been able to provide her family Christmas without the help of the programs supported by the Joint Powers Authority.

Families enrolled in Amelia's Light and the Path of Life Ministries often spend a year or more attempting to get back on their feet after confronting homelessness. The programs provide shelter and job training for families transitioning back into private housing.

"This program helps us a lot," Munoz said. "We are very grateful."

Ruby Blue and her son, Devon, 10, also expressed gratitude to the JPA volunteers.

"Look at all the smiling children here today," Ruby Blue said. "I think this is my best Christmas ever."

Michelle Cross said she had no specific gift in mind for her 16-year-old son, Jesse. Anything would be fine, she said.

"Whatever we receive, we will be thankful," Cross said.

Leonard Jarman, director of Path of Life Ministries, said he could not thank the March JPA staff enough for their generosity and caring.

"Words cannot describe it," he said. "You made their Christmas."



Santa Claus made a huge impression among the children living at the Path of Life Ministries and Amelia's Light.



Reyna Munoz with her son, Fernando, 7: "We are very grateful."



Perris City Councilman Mark Yarbrough, whose work also includes setting policy for the March Joint Powers Authority, delivers gifts to be distributed.



Santa's elves also included Lori Stone, executive director of the March JPA.