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Toys For Joy Serves Thousands of San Diego Families with Toys, Food & Clothing

Special to the East County Californian Wed November 29, 2017 05:45pm



On Saturday, Dec. 9, 25,000 people are expected to attend the 21st annual Toys for Joy event at from 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. The event has grown over the years and expanded to four locations, including El Cajon Valley High School, Lincoln High School, Southwest High School, and Vista High School. Twenty years in the running, families start lining up as early as 4:00 p.m. the day before for an opportunity to pick up toys and groceries for the holidays. Now more than ever, Toys for Joy has become a tradition that San Diego families count on every December, meeting the needs of thousands.

Over 5,200 people attended the event at the El Cajon site held at the El Cajon Valley High School. Over 5,800 toys were distributed throughout the day, and 2,500 bags of groceries distributed to families. California Senator Joel Anderson was one of those who attended the event and helped to hand out toys.

"Toys for Joy makes San Diego's holiday season a happier and more meaningful time," said California Senator Joel Anderson, 38th District. "I am grateful for and inspired by Pastor Miles and his volunteers who visit our neighborhoods year after year to continuously support local families in need, and I am looking forward to joining them again this year."

Toys for Joy is more than just a toy. Not only will children up to 11-years old receive a free toy, but also families will have the opportunity to receive free lunch, clothing, groceries and entertainment. Many volunteers, sponsors and community partners' work together to spread pervasive hope through this significant event.

According to a study by the Center for Policy Initiatives, the 2016 poverty rate in San Diego County was 12.3 percent, with the city of El Cajon showing the highest poverty rate of cities in San Diego County. CPI is a think tank that advocates for working families.

According to the USDA, there are many households that experience food insecurity. This means individuals are uncertain of where their next meal will come from. In San Diego County alone, there are 137,450 children experiencing food insecurity in their households. During the holiday season, it is even more difficult for families to provide toys and clothes for their families without sufficient funds and resources.

Toys for Joy bring hope by providing a toy, lunch and groceries to those in need. These toys are a way to change the lives of families in San Diego, and fulfill the main mission of the church to bring people together and transform the lives of San Diego by sharing the meaning of Christmas.

"Toys for Joy represents an opportunity for us to not just be the church at 805 Jackman Street in El Cajon, but to be the literal hands and feet of Jesus in the community," said Pastor Ricky Page. "The message of Jesus Christ is the hope that we bring, but a physical meal and a physical toy also offers hope to poor community that rarely have enough food on the table and absolutely no option to have a toy on a holiday that is centered on toys. El Cajon offers a unique challenge with thousands of immigrants from the Middle East who really came here with just the shirt on the back.

There are roughly 95,000 people living in El Cajon. Last year, we saw six percent of the population show up to receive gods' goodness! This year we would like to see that number grow significantly."

The event has grown to toys, food and more. Last year alone, Toys for Joy gave away over 25,000 toys, 15,100 bags of groceries, 312,500 articles of clothing and shoes to brighten the lives of many San Diego kids. This event is free and open to the community.

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To make a difference in the life of a child this Christmas, there are three ways to be part of Toys for Joy:

Volunteer. Sign up to volunteer with family and friends at toys-for-joy.org/volunteers

Give. Purchase a toy from the online wish list at toys-for-joy.org/toys

Partner. Monetary and/or in-kind gifts can be contributed online at toys-for-joy.org/donate

WHEN: Saturday, December 9, 2017 9:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.

WHERE:

El Cajon Valley High School - open to community

Southwest High School - open to community

Vista High School - open to community

In community partnership with City of El Cajon, City of San Diego Special Events, El Cajon Valley High School, Lincoln High School, Porter Elementary School, San Diego Parks & Recreation, San Diego Police Department, San Diego Sheriff Department, Vista High School, Southwest High School, and over 20 sponsors from all areas of San Diego will be represented.

ABOUT TOYS FOR JOY

Toys for Joy was founded by Pastor Miles McPherson of the Rock Church in 1996 to partner with local churches and community businesses and serve Southeastern San Diego. For the past 20 years, Toys for Joy has impacted thousands of lives through volunteers that provide toys, clothing, and food, in addition to health and community services. For more information, visit www.toys-for-joy.org.

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