



Helping Abused, Neglected and Abandoned Children



2435 E. La Jolla Drive • Tempe, Arizona 85282 • (480) 838-0085
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December 22, 2015

Cheryl Freeman
AZ Blankets 4 Kids

Dear Cheryl,

We wish to thank you and The AZ Blankets 4 Kids Organization for all the beautiful blankets the you gave us this year. You were a life saver. Those gifts were the very best. I thought that you might enjoy hearing about that Holiday party and how we distributed those gifts.

And now for the report on the party:

Arizonaans for Children's annual holiday party held on December 19 was an extraordinary production to behold. There are many moving parts at work preparing for the event. It takes form because of the generosity of donors and volunteers. Hundreds of empty boxes are delivered to Arizonaans for Children's storage site; the space is loaned to AFC at no cost by Kenyon Plastering. Volunteers package thousands of toys to prepare them for shipment to The Room Store warehouse where they are sorted by gender and age group over the course of two days. During the second week in December, 167 people spent 671 hours in the ware house wrapping presents. Each child typically receives an assortment of five or six gifts which includes a blanket, book, ball, board game and another toy.

Then there is the set up the day before which is done by 18 volunteers from Dream City Church and Master's Commission who prepared the church's gym floor and set up the tables and covered them in red paper. Nothing could have prepared us for this year's party. As the group homes and foster families started arriving you could feel the children's joy emanating from the small huddles at the check-in desks. This joy seemed to spread like wild fire to the volunteers and helped us get in the celebration mood for this wonderful event.



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Boys and girls of all ages danced in line as their caretaker checked them in to enter the holiday party at Phoenix First Assembly of God Church. They hopped and squealed as they greeted acquaintances residing in other group homes. Some of the most touching scenes involved siblings that had been brought into foster care and then separated and sent to different placements. The only time they get to see their siblings is at our party.

This year we were fortunate to have a donor, Jacket Racket in Canada, send along donations of beautiful winter coats which were displayed at the entryway before registration. Volunteers helped each youth find their 'perfect fit' and what a delight it was to see each child proudly modelling their "new coat." The coats were a huge hit--- each child seemed to find just the right coat to go with their holiday outfits. It was quite humbling to see the children so overjoyed with their new coats.

Eleven Bikers Against Bullies brought very expensive motorcycles to this event. The children played on the motorcycles, got their pictures taken and received free T-shirts, pictures and paste on tattoos. Bikers Against Bullies also made the \$40 gifts to the 15—18 year old boys possible. Kiwanis Club of Phoenix donated skateboards for every boy 11—14 years of age. This gift rounded out the other gifts for this age group which it is normally very hard to find presents for. In addition, due to the efforts of James Hansen, Vicki Hunt and a team of donors we were able to provide basketballs for all the boys from age 8---14 who attended. AZ Blankets 4 Kids donated most of the blankets that went into almost all the gift bags and were a heartfelt surprise. Junior League of Phoenix, Athene Robben and Kerry Feltenberg on behalf of Arizona Grand Resort donated most of the sundries that were given to the 11-18 year old girls. The Cardinals football team collected a wealth of presents at their December 8 game and hundreds of other donors collected gifts.

All 595 foster children ranging in ages from 2 months to 18 years found a reason to celebrate on this Saturday. Talking, laughing, eating, dancing, and receiving gifts were the order of the day from 11:30 AM to 2:00 PM. The traditional Christmas meal was prepared by our caterer, Diane Bowman, and the tasty desserts were provided by Café Valley Bakery. DJ Matt Figueroa kept the lively music and the trivia games going.

Cardinals Big Red Mascot spent 1 ½ hours at the party entertaining the children, dancing to the music and posing for pictures. Santa Claus' grand entrance inspired the children to sing-a-long to "Jingle Bells." Then Santa led hundreds of screaming kids over to the children's pavilion to get their gifts. The 126 volunteers dispensed bags of wrapped gifts and gift envelopes. So much excitement from so many displaced youths made every moment of work worth it.

New and positive memories were gifted to foster youth on Saturday, December 19th at this spacious and inviting church.

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This magical gathering happened because of YOU.

Without your donations, ideas and volunteer commitment the 893 attendees would not have been able to celebrate all together at this one festive venue. That common thread, though sad as it sounds especially at the holiday season, is that everyone who attended the party is linked through the foster care system. At a tough time of year when foster children miss their families, you brought them together and made the children smile--- thank you for your generous spirit and your gift of sharing. At present time there are over 19,000 children in foster care in Arizona.

I have enclosed a collage of pictures from the party. May hope and peace fill your heart as you reflect on the foster children we serve.

Thank you! Have a Prosperous New Year!

Kaye McCarthy

President