



Santa meets with Noah Tameyo (left) and his cousins, Mikih Harris, 3, and Jayden Harris, 5, at the Nice Guys Giveaway at Petco Park. CHARLIE NEUMAN - U-T PHOTOS

Groups across county play Santa for needy

ROGER SHOWLEY • U-T

SAN DIEGO
Bins full of toys, mounds of clothing that nearly reached the ceiling and fixings for a Christmas feast greeted thousands of needy San Diegans at several holiday giveaways Saturday.

"People need a little help for the holidays," said Douglas Moore, chairman of the Nice Guys nonprofit organization. "It's our way of giving back."

The Nice Guys group, with about 150 male and female members, played Santa to about 800 families at Tailgate Park opposite Petco Park for a day of rides, food and toys.

Brittany Manson, 20, brought her 4-year-old son Zion from Chula Vista for laptime with St. Nick and the Grinch.

"It's really a great thing they're doing here," Manson said. "It will take a load off many families."

The volunteers seemed to have as much fun as the families in need.

"This is a dream. I love books," said Lindsay Morrison, a 17-year-old Canyon Crest Academy student stationed at four long rows of tables piled high with new and used books.

Nearby, Matthew Furman, 11, and his sister Grace, 4, got their faces painted at Clown Conspiracy.

"It's great for the kids," said their grandmother, Carmen Stalker.

But Matthew was eager for more action. "I want to go on that big ride," he said, pointing to a whirling fair ride called the Roundup.

The three Garra brothers — Jonathan, 10; Abner, 6; and Joshua, 4 — strapped into their seats on the Frog Jumper ride and couldn't

stop smiling as they were jerked up and down in unsteady spurts. Jeremiah Rogers, 10, snuggled up with a service dog at the Paw-sitive Teams booth.

The day's largest giveaway was sponsored by Rock Church at Lincoln High School and neighboring Porter Elementary on Imperial Avenue. More than 12,000 people were expected — the first showed up at 3 p.m. Friday — and each of the kids was guaranteed at least one toy. Untold bags of clothing filled the elementary school multipurpose room stage, while plenty of free refreshments and food to take home were available.

Christopher Michael, 2, fingered one toy after another before finally selecting a toy train engine.

"He's a little overwhelmed by all the toys," said his grandmother, Debbie McCaw of Santee.

Meanwhile, in Sherman Heights, 2,200 children plus their parents gathered at Kimbrough Elementary, where 21 bins of toys collected by the San Diego Police Department's Central Division were waiting. The surplus will be dispersed

among other divisions around the city for their toy drives.

Kids were led one by one to Mr. and Mrs. Claus (Joe Oliveras and Pat Justice), decked out in their wintry finery on the summery day. A few lucky kids had been preselected to receive bikes or scooters purchased with funds from Walmart and Continental Marine.

"I know which bike I want," said Quentasia Height, 7, eyeing one with hearts on the seat.

From La Jolla, Santa led a caravan of about 250 bicyclists to the Salvation Army Kroc Center in Rolando with a haul of toys. And in Chula Vista, volunteers with the city's Police Activities League delivered \$5,000 of toys and food to 262 needy families.

"This continues to be a rewarding opportunity to help disadvantaged families get help during the holiday season," Police Chief David Bejarano said in a statement. "It's also a great opportunity for officers to interact with community members in such a positive setting."

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Luke Wallace, 2, and his siblings Davion and Shelia Rose, both 3, collect stockings filled with goodies Saturday at the Nice Guys Giveaway.



Nice Guys volunteers Ron Blair, (from left) Jerry Mohr, John Lynch and Steve Parker cook hot dogs at the Nice Guys Giveaway.

ONLINE
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