

Farm families receive a Christmas celebration

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By Wendy Alexander

More than 200 children were greeted by Santa Claus, played by Madera City Council Member Robert Poythress, assisted by an elf, Madera Mayor Sally Bompreszi, after selecting a toy each at The Crossings at Madera Christmas celebration Saturday.

The event tried to help less advantaged farmworker families celebrate Christmas by providing toys and groceries, as well as old-fashioned cheer.

"It was a day filled with many happy and excited children," said Cesar Delgado, executive director for the non-profit organization Heritage Community Housing. "There are so many caring and compassionate people who make events like this possible."

The Crossings at Madera is a 64-unit housing community exclusively for families who work in agriculture.

More than 60 families, all residents of The Crossings, lined up outside and awaited their turns to enter the community center where hundreds of unwrapped toys were waiting to be selected by the children. Many of the children appeared to have a difficult time deciding which of the many toys to choose.

Afterwards, the families were treated to a pizza dinner and given \$10 gift certificates for groceries from the Bridge Store.

A flat screen television, DVD player and a selection of DVDs gifted by Urban Housing Communities LLC were unveiled during the celebration for residents to enjoy at The Crossings community center.

"This is an awesome event and I feel privileged to participate in bringing joy to the kids," said Bompreszi, "I can't thank Urban Housing Communities enough for giving our community a facility such as this that fills the needs of affordable housing."

Many of the toys were donated by partners of Heritage Community Housing, Inc. Delgado said JR Sports, the Bridge Store and Poythress were also contributors.

Heritage Community Housing, according to Delgado, was formed in 1995 to help provide affordable apartment housing for seniors and families, as well as identify local resources to meet the needs of residents. The non-profit manages The Crossings at Madera.

"While it takes participation from local governments, community groups and other partners to make an affordable housing development successful, we know that it wouldn't work without a commitment from our residents," said Merilee Langdon of Urban Housing Communities, which is an affordable housing development partner of financial services firm Morgan Stanley. "The caring and supportive nature of our families has enabled this community to thrive and we wanted to show our appreciation."



Eight-month-old Janet Villasenor pays a visit to Santa (Robert Poythress) during a Christmas celebration at The Crossings



Mayor Sally Bompreszi and Santa (Robert Poythress) greet Maria Perez and 4-month-old Angel Falcon during The Crossing at Madera Christmas party Saturday.

Photos by: Wendy Alexander / The Madera Tribune