

Store helps kids get new clothes

Twenty local children are treated to a shopping spree to help them get new school clothes

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REDLANDS Arlene Cruz scurried through the girls' clothing department during Mervyn's ChildSpree in search of new school clothes. The 9-year-old was followed closely by Anne Golden and Ryan Cochran, who volunteered to help her during the shopping spree.

Within an hour, the girl had a cart full of shorts, pants and shoes.

The spree began at 7:30 Saturday morning, but by 7 a.m., 20 children from the Boys and Girls Club of Redlands and ASPIRA Foster and Family Services gathered with volunteers at the store's entrance for the annual back-to-school event.

"I have done this event for about 10 years and every year it gets better and better," said Doris Parker, assistant manager.

Every year, Mervyn's stores partner with social service organizations, schools and youth assistance programs to provide children with \$100 shopping sprees. Since 1992, ChildSpree has donated \$12 million and served more than \$160,000 children, according to the store's Web site.

Volunteers helped each child, and when the shopping ended, the children were treated to a breakfast sponsored by McDonald's and were given backpacks filled with school supplies.

The volunteers tied shoes as children tried them on while making sure the children stayed within \$100 worth of clothes and shoes.

While Cochran added up the prices, Golden checked the racks searching for the right size for Arlene.

"I like how excited the kids are to run to racks and pick anything they want," Golden said.

Crystal Porter, who works at the store, helped one child find clothes and recalled going on a similar shopping spree when she was a child.

"It is rewarding," she said. "Anything to give back is wonderful."

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Anne Golden helps 9-year-old Arlene Cruz shop for \$100 of new clothes Saturday morning. (picture by C.L. Lopez/Redlands Daily Facts)