

Kids go on a shopping spree

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Mentone Elementary School fifth-grader Mauricio Mendoza holds up a gift for his mother during a holiday shopping spree at Mervyn's. He receives assistance from University of Redlands graduate student Courtney Carter, a volunteer working with Redlands Boys & Girls Club. (DAVID JAMES HEISS/Redlands Daily Facts)

Early Saturday morning 25 young people were treated to a shopping spree at Mervyn's on Industrial Park Avenue.

Children from the Redlands Boys & Girls Club and Aspira Foster Services in San Bernardino were selected to receive \$100 gift cards to spend during a holiday sale, compliments of the employees at Mervyn's.

"I've been here 26 years and think this is a wonderful opportunity," said assistant manager Doris Park, who donated cameras and film to all 25 participants to record their experience.

The employees of Mervyn's pitched in to buy additional gifts and filled stockings, which were presented at the store by Santa Claus.

The McDonald's on West Redlands Boulevard provided children with breakfast, which was served in the Mervyn's team room.

The program was part of the nationwide Mervyn's ChildSpree shopping event.

Gabe Nunez, a fifth-grader at Mentone Elementary School, took advantage of the holiday sales, picking out clothes he usually couldn't afford otherwise.

He was escorted around the store by University of Redlands volunteer Pavel Ilie, who was recruited to assist the Boys & Girls Club and foster children from Aspira.

"I heard about this opportunity for the kids and said, 'For sure,' " Ilie said. "This is exciting."

Alex Mendoza, a fifth-grader at Mentone School, bought a car launcher for his younger brother Mauricio, who was also participating in the shopping spree with their younger sister Brittany.

"It feels good because you don't have to spend a lot of money," Alex said.

Mervyn's selected Boys & Girls Club and Aspira because of a previous partnership the company enjoys with the organizations, according to Park.

According to Boys & Girls Club chief professional officer P.T. McEwen, his students were selected based on who were the neediest in their club.

"This is a good opportunity between Mervyn's and the Boys & Girls Club," said Afarah Board, chair of marketing for Boys & Girls Club. "I thought it was neat that there were a couple of kids who were not just using their spree for themselves, but using it to buy gifts for their family. It's great to see they have that opportunity."

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