

ACTION MATTERS

Area Christians Taking Initiative on Needs

A PERIODICAL FROM THE ACTION FOUNDATION

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COMMUNITY CHRISTMAS SHOPPE

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Unfortunately, I didn't have an opportunity to attend every ACTION Community Christmas Shoppe this year. However, I do know from talking with other volunteers that each location throughout the county was alike in showing warm hospitality, gracious efficiency and Christ's love for the less fortunate in our community. However, I was able to serve at the Conejo Christmas Shoppe. I don't know if it was the Santa's hats, the red and green shirts or the name tags around their necks that made so many every day people — people of all ages, all sizes and from all kinds churches look so remarkably alike and so remarkably like Christ.



These hundreds of volunteers served exactly how Christ would have served -- humbly, graciously and with extraordinary kindness. Everything at Christmas Shoppe was beautifully organized and efficiently run, from the nursery care to the prayer room, the Spirit of Christ showed through in everything that was done.

One friend reported seeing a very large man, walking through the parking lot, carrying a big black plastic bag filled with Christmas presents. At one point he was so overwhelmed with emotion that he had to stop and put down the bag. Huge sobs shook his broad shoulders and tears streamed down his face. Are there words for a moment of gratefulness like that?



Another friend was a Personal Shopper. She reports seeing God do one miracle after another in the Christmas Shoppe, when just the right gift would miraculously appear at just the right moment. The final miracle occurred at the very end of the day when a teenager came to shop in place of her working mother and she had spent all the family's gift points on her younger siblings. There was really nothing left in the Shoppe for a teenager and it was at that moment that my friend sent up a silent prayer, "Please Lord, You must have something for this young girl." Literally seconds later they were approached by a volunteer who handed the teenager a brand new "Nook" as a special gift. The teenager and my friend broke down in tears of gratefulness. One more friend reported on his experience in the prayer room. Shoppers would come in there with their prayer needs. They would write their burdens on a card, nail them to a wooden cross, receive prayer and then leave the things that weighed them down behind. My friend explained that he began to pray on his own with the people, but he quickly became aware that it was Christ that took over and was praying through him. In all his years he had never experienced anything quite like that. The prayer room was truly a holy place.



Everyone involved with ACTION Community Christmas Shoppe should be very proud of the wonderful good that was accomplished. Every toy that was purchased, every dollar that was given, every child that was

cared for, every present wrapped, every hour that was spent planning and executing this generous ministry went toward creating a uniquely God-filled experience – for those who were served and also for those who served. How pleased our Lord must be when He sees His people care for others and love one another in such a way. My prayer is that Christmas Shoppe will grow and grow, so that we all might look more and more like our Lord and ACTION might continue to touch the lives of the people in our community.

By Joyce Marcarelli

Jill's Joys

By Jill Upson, Executive Director

YOU are a joy to me! I am always so inspired and thrilled to see the impact that serving has... on the people being served as well as on the volunteers. Just reading Joyce's Christmas Shoppe article brings tears of Joy to me. **Thank you!**

- Thank you volunteers. You are so generous with your time and have such a heart to minister and serve. You are such a blessing to so many. You inspire me!
- Thank you donors. You share your treasures that God has given you. Your generosity goes beyond just filling a need. From new donors to those that continue to support the ministry alike, you give sacrificially according to the resources God has given you believing in the mission. I admire you!
- Thank you churches. You see the vision of uniting in Christ and step-up to make a difference in the lives of our neighbors sharing the love and hope that Christ has for each one of us. I am so grateful!
- Thank you agencies. You see that together we can make a larger impact and serve those that God has called us to serve. We are blessed to have you as part of God's team. It excites me!
- Thank you staff and board. You give of yourself in so many ways, listening and taking seriously God's word and guidance. We couldn't do this without you. I feel so blessed.

I'm so excited for 2014 to see where God guides us and to work alongside each one of you as God calls us to serve.

Blessings to you in 2014!

Serving Together,

Jill



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How did you see God work at Christmas Shoppe...



Words from the volunteers...

"He worked in the hearts of me and my Leather and Lace biker sisters. Reminding us to continually be thankful for the blessings in our lives and to continue to volunteer in our community."

"The smiles on the children's faces melted my heart, a child was holding my hand and wanting to take a picture with me for Santa—pure love."

"Gratitude in the shoppers faces was priceless."

"So many prayers the room was full, we didn't have enough clip boards to go around!"

"Generosity, Christ's love "in action" expressed through volunteers."

"We were able to outreach to people in our community and provide support and fellowship to parents."

"Powerfully!"

"God's hands were on everything."

"Our first shoppers were really broken and needed grace and love. Their tears during prayer were very moving."

"Everywhere I looked God was at work...in the kindness of the volunteers...in the humbled hearts of the guests...everywhere."

"Thus far I have been so blessed to watch two young women accept Christ into their lives! We have connected heart to heart!"

"People came willing to pray and be open about their lives. The Holy Spirit was truly moving."

Christmas Shoppe by the Numbers

Guests Served	—————>	Over 2,000
Toys	—————>	Over 14,000
Churches	—————>	Over 50
Volunteers	—————>	Over 1,300
Agencies & Schools	—————>	Over 75
Businesses & Community Organizations	—————>	Over 200
Prayer Requests	—————>	Over 350