Officers support those in need

Police continue to spread holiday cheer through difficult times

By Anthony Thomas
Contributing Writer

Despite snow and Covid-19, Christmas arrived early for some local children this year. It was part of the Shop with a Cop event provided by the Midwest City Police Department and Walmart.

Each child was paired with a police officer or department employee and given $100 for a Walmart shopping spree.

The group included about 60 children and 35 police department employees. The event provides the opportunity for kids to see police officers in a positive light, and for officers to see the impact it has on children.

Cpt. Roger Ross explained how every officer is called to serve their community and how everyone looks forward to putting on this event every year.

"It's always good to show generosity to others. Every officer got into this job to serve, so it's fun to get to know the kids and show them that police officers aren't bad guys," Ross said. "We are just normal people. We all love doing this for these kids."

Many officers brought their families along with them to the event. One family that holds a special place in the department's heart is the Harding family.

Three years ago, the grandmother adopted her daughter's six children after the children's mother passed away from cancer. Since then, the department has made sure the family participates every year and lends a helping hand whenever needed.

The program is largely funded by Walmart's local charity program.

The Midwest City Police Department also collects donations for the program throughout the year.

Since it started, the program has assisted about 1,110 children in Midwest City. Local schools, neighborhood associations, and other social service agencies help select children to participate in the event. The children usually receive breakfast provided by Walmart but due to Covid-19, they were not able to do that this year.

Maj. Bob Cornelison talked about how great it is to get to know the kids and give back during the holiday season.

"What's great about doing this is it allows officers to connect with kids and allows the kids to see officers as normal people. While at the same time bringing joy to the kids during the Christmas season," Cornelison said.

This was the 24th year for the Midwest City Shop with a Cop program, which started in 1997. Chief Brandon Clabes, who was an assistant chief at the time, wanted to start a Christmas program in Midwest City. Walmart quickly stepped in to help and the partnership has continued ever since.

Midwest City's Shop with a Cop program was one of the first events of its kind in the U.S. Since then, police departments around the nation have started Shop with a Cop events to spread holiday cheer to children in need.

The Harding family is happy to do some holiday shopping with local officers.
PHOTO BY ANTHONY THOMAS

Sgt. Jarvis Nash takes some youngsters shopping.
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