

**MORONGO
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Morongo Helps Grant Holiday Wishes for 3,500 Children

Tribe provides \$100,000 for annual Christmas Cheer All Year shopping spree to benefit disadvantaged children, including 600 kids from the San Geronio Pass.

ONTARIO, Calif. – Holiday dreams came true for 3,500 low-income children from across Inland Southern California on Monday as they took part in the annual Christmas Cheer All Year shopping spree, sponsored by the Morongo Band of Mission Indians.

Throughout the morning, smiling children emerged from Toys R Us clutching toys from the new *Star Wars: Rogue One* movie, or other popular Disney films. Others carried Legos, Avengers action figures, Barbie dolls, Nerf toys, skateboards, stuffed animals, footballs, and games.

“The Morongo Band of Mission Indians is excited to be teaming up with Christmas Cheer All Year to brighten the holidays for thousands of local children in need,” Morongo Tribal Chairman Robert Martin said. “For some of the children here today, this will be the only present they will receive this holiday. It’s wonderful to see the joy on their faces as they shop for the toy of their dreams.”

As title sponsor for the popular holiday event, Morongo donated \$100,000 in cash and services to the nonprofit Christmas Cheer All Year organization, which conducted the shopping spree at the Toys R Us in Ontario. Children from across the Inland Empire, including 600 San Geronio Pass, were selected by local charities and nonprofit groups to take part in the event.

Ten-year-old Jackson Brown of Cabazon said he picked out a yellow and blue soccer ball. “This is my first time having a soccer ball,” he said, adding that he plays soccer at school.

Brenda Rodriguez of Banning, who brought her two grandsons, Nathan and Luther, to the shopping spree, said the event provided a boost to families in need during the busy holidays.

“I’m grateful to Morongo and I feel really blessed,” Rodriguez said. “It helps out a lot.”

Since 2010, Morongo has donated more than \$650,000 to the annual shopping sprees organized by Rick Lozano, founder of Christmas Cheer All Year and a longtime Fox 11 News journalist. To date, the program has reached over 20,000 children.

“I can’t say enough about Morongo’s generosity and commitment to children and families in need. Year after year, the tribe helps us make sure that local kids who are in the greatest need get to enjoy the holiday season,” Lozano said.

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As in past years, hundreds of children in protective care with the Riverside County Department of Public Social Services (DPSS) took part in the shopping spree program. Without Morongo's help, these children would have gone without a present, county officials said.

Six hundred children from the San Gorgonio Pass and Coachella Valley took part in the shopping spree, including dozens from the James A. Venable Community Center in Cabazon.

"Our children are always very excited about the annual shopping spree. This event is such a wonderful blessing for many of our families who are struggling," said Deana Mann, manager of the Venable Center. "Thanks to Morongo and Christmas Cheer All Year, many of the children we serve will have a very happy holiday."

The Morongo Band of Mission Indians has a long tradition of giving. The tribe contributes more than \$1 million annually to support communities and nonprofits across the Inland Empire and Southern California.
