NEWS RELEASE

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Fontana Unified Continues to Meet Community Need at 26th Annual 'Fontana Santas' Toy Distribution Event

FONTANA, CA – A line of cars filled with families wound their way through Fontana Unified's parking lot, lined with festive volunteers, to receive community donations during the District's 26th annual Fontana Santas event on Dec. 16.

Fontana Unified students, staff and community members loaded up each car with gifts of toys, food and information on community resources. Many were dressed in holiday garb, including Santa hats, reindeer antlers, holiday sweaters and pajamas, providing a festive experience for everyone in attendance.

Henry J. Kaiser High School freshman Melanie Ortiz was among the host of volunteers who came out for the event, loading up cars with bags of toys while laughing and having fun with her friends.

"For me, one of the best gifts is seeing the smiles on all the kids' faces who are getting a gift, I know there are some families out there who are struggling and cannot afford new toys," Ortiz said. "This event truly makes me happy."

Fontana Santas began in 1997 when the Fontana School Police Department learned a Fontana boy ran away from home after Christmas because he did not receive any presents. Since then, the Fontana School Police Department and Fontana Unified employees have collected toys and donations from local organizations and delivered them to families in need during the holidays, creating a treasured tradition that has provided toys to thousands of Fontana Unified students over the last 26 years.

"Fontana Santas is a cherished tradition that takes months of planning and a lot of volunteer hours to pull off each year," Superintendent Miki R. Inbody said. "It is inspiring to see the entire community rally together and support our neighbors in need this holiday season."

Fontana Santas is hosted in partnership with the Fontana School Police Department, Fontana Teachers Association, United Steelworkers Local 8599, the Fontana Foundation of Hope, Fontana School Police Officers Association and Fontana Management Association.

Each year, Fontana Santas grows as it adds new resources and new community groups, said FUSD Child Welfare and Attendance Liaison Lydia Wibert, who was instrumental in starting the event alongside Fontana School Police Officer Cindy Evaro in 1997.

"It starts to feel like the holidays when this event happens, everyone just comes together and helps out. There are so many volunteers and companies that come out and give resources and their time for us," Wibert said. "This event has gone on so long we have seen recipients of the program come back to volunteer with their children. This time of year is all about giving and that is what this event is all about."

PHOTO CAPTIONS:

FUSD_FONTANA_SANTAS1: From left, Fontana Unified students Marvina Luna, Zachary Flores and Julian Iñiguez volunteer their time to pass out donations of toys to FUSD families in need during the District's 26th annual Fontana Santas event on Dec. 16.

FUSD_FONTANA_SANTAS2: Summit High junior Alyssa Gason passes out donations during Fontana Santas on Dec. 16. A line of cars wound their way through the Fontana Unified parking lot to receive community donations of toys, food and more from volunteers.

FUSD_FONTANA_SANTAS3: Members of the Fontana School Police Department helped load cars with donations of toys, food and more during the 26th annual Fontana Santas event on Dec. 16. Each year, the Fontana School Police Department and Fontana Unified Employees collect and deliver toys and donations from local organizations during the holidays.

VIDEO FILES:

Raw video highlights of Fontana Unified's 26th annual 'Fontana Santas' toy distribution event can be found and downloaded here.

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