



Fontana Unified School District

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NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Dec. 25, 2025

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Fontana Unified Brings Holiday Joy to More Than 300 District Families, Celebrates 28 Years of Kindness

FONTANA, CA – Fontana Unified School District (FUSD), in partnership with the Fontana School Police Department (FSPD), continued a cherished tradition of compassion and community by bringing smiles to more than 300 families during the 28th annual Fontana Santas event on Dec. 20.

What began in 1997 as a small act of kindness has grown into one of the District's most meaningful holiday traditions. Fontana Santas was founded by FSPD Officer Cindy Evaro and FUSD Child Welfare and Attendance Liaison Lydia Salazar Wibert after learning about a boy who ran away from home after not receiving any Christmas presents. Determined to ensure no child felt unseen during the holidays, the pair rallied support for five families in need, laying the foundation for a program that today serves hundreds.

This year, families received toys ranging from Play-Doh sets, bicycles, books, and gift cards, along with food items such as turkeys and hams, to help bring relief and joy during the holiday season.

"The only reason it's grown like this is because of the community, from our sponsors and volunteers to our students and officers," said Beulah White, FSPD Administrative Services Technician and close friend of Evaro. "Without them, we can't do this. This is about everybody coming together and working as a team."

Preparation for the event is the result of months of collecting donations and sponsorships, along with volunteers organizing and packaging thousands of items. During the event, Fontana Unified's Board of Education members, Superintendent Miki R. Inbody, students, staff, and community volunteers – alongside Mr. and Mrs. Claus – hand-delivered the gifts to families through a drive-through-style pickup.

Fontana Santas continues to honor the legacy of Evaro following her passing from cancer in 2014, keeping her commitment to service central to the event. For White, the event also serves as a personal reminder of Evaro's generosity and support during a challenging period in her life.

"I was going through a divorce, I didn't have money, and Christmas was coming," White said. "Cindy asked me what was wrong, and I told her I didn't have anything to give my kids. She came back with two big bags of toys for them...so when I say I know what these families are going through, I really know it."

Summit High School sophomore Johan Duran also understands the impact of Fontana Santas firsthand. His family received support from Fontana Santas when he was younger. Today, he gives back by volunteering alongside fellow cadets in the Career Technical Education Law Enforcement program.

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“I’ve been here before when I was a kid, coming in and getting toys,” Duran said. “My family got help when we were struggling, and I really appreciated it. Now I see it more as helping others. It’s really nice to see people being so joyful, especially during the holidays.”

Before the start of the Fontana Santas event, FSPD also hosted its annual Shop with a Cop program at a local Walmart. Through the generosity of Foundation of Hope CEO Jacquie Long and Wal-Mart, participating students were provided \$180 to purchase items of their choice alongside a FUSD officer.

The success of Fontana Santas is made possible through the continued support of community partners, including the Fontana Teachers Association, United Steelworkers, Fontana Foundation of Hope, Fontana School Police Officers Association, and Fontana Management Association.

Since Evaro’s passing, FSPD officers have remained committed to her vision.

“She wanted this to be our legacy for school police, and we promised her we would continue it and make it grow,” White said. “She started this legacy, and we will continue it for as long as school police exists.”

PHOTO CAPTIONS

FUSD_FONTANASANTAS1: Fontana Unified School District (FUSD) Board of Education members, Superintendent Miki R. Inbody (pictured), students, staff, and community volunteers – alongside Mr. and Mrs. Claus – hand-delivered the gifts to families during the 28th annual Fontana Santas event held on Dec. 20.

FUSD_FONTANASANTAS2: FUSD, in partnership with the Fontana School Police Department, spend months collecting donations and sponsorships to distribute toys, food, and gift cards to more than 300 families during the Fontana Santas event on Dec. 20, along with Mr. and Mrs. Claus.

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