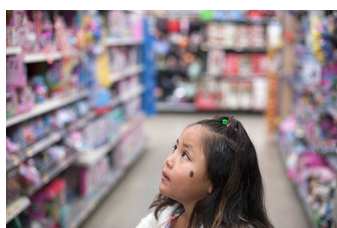
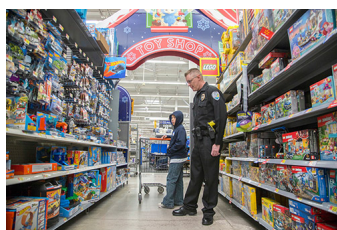


## 'Tis the season to shop...with a cop

Written by By Dee Velasco For the Sun  
Friday, 21 December 2018 05:56

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## **Program kindles long-lasting friendship with law enforcement**

The sight of flashing blue and red lights in front of the Gallup Walmart, 1650 W. Maloney Ave., was hard to miss the morning of Dec. 15. A row of police units in front of the store indicated something was happening inside — and indeed, something was going on behind Walmart’s doors. But despite any preconceptions of flashing lights and police units, the events unfolding at the scene were, well, jolly and nice.

The occasion was “Shop with a Cop,” an event during which selected McKinley County children visited Walmart, paired up with a police officer and a \$100 gift card.

Children throughout McKinley County were selected by their schools to take part in the program.

Gallup Police Department Lt. Rosanne Morrisette, who helped make the event a reality, said the program is a great way for children to get to know police officers and to understand cops aren’t anything to fear.

“We’re great people and we’re out here to help the community,” she said. “We’re just doing our job and it’s good for the kids to see that.”

Law enforcement from the GPD, Navajo Nation Police, McKinley County Sheriff’s Office and New Mexico State Police took part in the event. And McDonald’s provided a free breakfast for the kids and officers.

McDonald’s Supervisor Phillip Dela Riva said he took on the opportunity to serve the event without hesitaiton.

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Dela Riva said he wanted to give back to the community, and especially to the officers who do so much for it. He said he was proud to be a part of the event.

“We love to give back to our community,” Dela Riva said. “We got to feed these kids and officers before they go shopping, I don’t know how long it’s going to take but they’re going to need their energy [laughing]. The officers do a great job in the community, so we got to reward them for taking care of us.”

Chee Montano of State Farm Insurance organized the event, which was a hit this year, despite a hiatus in years past.

Montano, who has put on various community events, said he tries to help officers as much as he can through his event work.

This year, he offered to host Shop with a Cop, and came up with funding by reaching out to the Gallup community for donations.

Montano said they raised about \$38,000.

“We did this in only a two-week window, and prior to planning this, the officers were excited about doing this and it’s great to see it all come together, especially for the kids,” he said.

The goal was to join 30 kids with officers, and this year, they event saw 31 kids, plus their partnering officers.

Once the kids picked a cop and ate their breakfast, the shopping commenced.

The kids were excited to splurge with their \$100 gift cards, and happiness was also evident on

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the faces of the officers as they trotted down the aisles with the children.

Christian Roman, of the New Mexico State Police, couldn't wait to hit the aisles.

Roman said he was thrilled to be a part of the event and have the opportunity to establish a friendship with the children.

He said this event shows the kids a totally different side of cops, and that is a good thing. Roman teamed up with 10-year-old Angelo from Tohatchi. Both finished their breakfast and were ready to do some shopping.

"It's fantastic, just being around the kids gives us an opportunity to talk to them and they can talk to us," Roman said. "Because if they ever see us on the road, they're not afraid of us – [they know] that we're there to help them."

Meanwhile, GPD Officer John Yearly and Latisha were also ready to do some Christmas shopping.

Yearly, who has participated in the event in the past, was happy to have it return and to show a whole new side of law enforcement to the kids.

"It's exciting to see this come back and to let the children know that there's another side of law enforcement," Yearly said. "Cops are just like big kids if you want to call it that [laughing]."

Santa Claus was at the event, too, and each child had the opportunity to take a picture with him and tell him about their unique shopping experience with a cop.

For more information on Shop with a Cop, contact GPD Lt. Rosanne Morrisette at (505)

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