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Season of giving: ways to give back



Alison Alcala, 2, points to an item she wants at the South County Outreach toy store. Each Christmas, South County Outreach hosts an annual “toy store” with toys donated by the community for families who can’t afford holiday presents. (SAM GANGWER, ORANGE COUNTY REGISTER)

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Kids Give To Kids toy drive

Inspired by his own personal strife — coming of age in the foster care system and facing homelessness in his 50s — Daniel Barrett founded the cardboard-box toy exchange Kids Give to Kids in his search for his life's purpose.

ADVERTISING



“So quickly, this became way bigger than me and just my story,” Barrett said, after stumbling upon a community of strangers willing to sponsor, volunteer and give what they could for the sake of giving.

By December, he projects to have about 300 drop-off zones around Orange County and by March of next year, an app that would allow kids to shop for the toy they want from a 10,000-item inventory. He's collecting toys year round through monthly subscriptions, reciprocated by local and corporate businesses as well as “gracious givers,” and picking up toys in bulk from those looking to empty their garages.

Using restaurants as safe spaces, Barrett's designed an exchange where kids will soon be able to select the toy they want to donate or take home, pick-up or drop-off, at a local sponsored business and receive a free kid's meal — for both parties.



Donation boxes for new, unwrapped toys will be in the lobby of the Laguna Woods Village Community Center through Dec. 23.

The first Kids Give To Kids toy drive will be held 5-8 p.m. Thursday, Dec. 13 at Peppinos Family Italian Restaurant, 23600 Rockfield Blvd., Lake Forest. For information call Daniel Barrett, 949-662-9932.

MemorialCare Saddleback Medical Center

Each holiday season, MemorialCare Saddleback Medical Center leaves their lights on.

Bulb by bulb, the hospital's "Tree of Light" becomes lit with each contribution from their monetary donation platform.

The symbolic evergreen is displayed in the hospital's chapel throughout the season until Jan. 4. Names of those memorialized by loved ones will also take part in the display, listed in the "Book of Remembrance."

"Patients undergoing hospice or palliative care are facing serious illness and death," Director of Fund Development Melissa Centeno said, speaking on all sides of the healing process. "This program not only cares for the patients but also helps the family members."

All gifts benefit MemorialCare Hospice & Palliative Services at Saddleback Medical Center, including the families in need at the center, and will be matched by an anonymous donor up to \$5,000, Centeno said.

Centeno said they welcome online contributions, which can be made at memorialcare.org/smcf. For more information call 949-452-3724 or email smcf@memorialcare.org.

South County Outreach Adopt-A-Senior Holiday Giving Program

South County Outreach began in 1989 as a food pantry aid to families. Now, it's a \$3 billion, multiservice provider that distributes emergency, non-perishable and fresh food to about 2,000 residents per month.

One thing they've learned over 29 years: seniors are in need, too.

According to the website, 15 percent of their clients are over the age of 65. That's why in 2016, they started a giveback program designed with pensioners in mind — Adopt-A-Senior.

An estimated 174 seniors were “adopted” last year, according to their website.

How it works: SCO pairs sponsors with a senior in need. Once matched, sponsors shop for a gift and groceries to prepare a meal. Lastly, both parties decide on a neutral location to meet for the delivery.

Applications to become a sponsor opened the first week in October.

Seniors are selected from those already registered in SCO's Food Pantry program. If interested in joining, seniors must provide a photo ID of every adult in the household, provide proof of current address, provide proof of income, if any, as well as an email. Seniors must live in the service area, which spans from Irvine to San Clemente.

For more information call 949-380-8144, ext. 207 or email holiday@sco-oc.org. Visit the website at sco-oc.org/adopt-a-senior-holiday-giving-program/.

Toys for Marine Families, Laguna Woods Armed Forces Adoption Club

Now through Nov. 25, the Laguna Woods Armed Forces Adoption Club will be collecting toy donations Village-wide for the Marine Families of the Guadalcanal Battalion of the 1st Marine Division at Camp Pendleton.

The new, unwrapped toys will be delivered to families with children living on the Marine base for distribution.

If interested in donating, drop off gifts for donation in the marked boxes located in any clubhouse and the Recreation Office in the Community Center.

For more information contact the Recreation Office at 949-597-4273 or email recreation@vmsinc.org.

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