



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE, December 20, 2017

Four photos/captions included in document below press release. (Photos courtesy of Community Outreach Ministry)

Media contact: Dr. Mona Davies, Community Outreach Ministry, (951)698-7650, daviesmmd1@msn.com

Angel Tree Party Brightens Christmas For Children Of Prisoners

Annual Community Outreach Ministry Angel Tree Christmas Party ensures 200 Southwest Riverside County children receive gifts on behalf of their incarcerated parents

SOUTHWEST RIVERSIDE COUNTY, CA — Just as in years past, the 17th annual Angel Tree Christmas party hosted Sunday, December 17 by Dr. Mona and Bob Davies of Community Outreach Ministry was a reunion of sorts. In partnership with Angel Tree® a program of Prison Fellowship, the event held at Elks Lodge #2591 of Lake Elsinore/Wildomar is a way for incarcerated moms and dads to ensure their children receive something under the tree.

The familiar faces of volunteers greeted the children from Murrieta, Temecula, Wildomar and Lake Elsinore. As the youngsters arrived with their caregivers — in some cases one of their parents, in other cases a grandparent or two or three — the children were offered face painting, and met Smokey the Bear and toured a U.S. Department of Forestry firetruck. Jonay Cordeiro branch manager of Wells Fargo Central Avenue, Lake Elsinore and team taught an educational financial literacy game allowing the children to have fun while gaining knowledge around finances.

Many wore their best dresses and suits for the occasion as they anticipated the gifts they would take home on behalf of the parent or parents they may not see that often.

Among the 200 Southwest Riverside County children adopted this year to receive gifts through the local Angel Tree program coordinated by the Davies' Wildomar-based nonprofit were sisters Isabella, 9, and Angelina, 8, of Murrieta. Their father, Albert Ortega, was sentenced in 2009 to life in prison. The girls were just babies at the time, said their mother, Ashley Linn. Although they talk to him on the phone, he is currently incarcerated at Corcoran State Prison in Northern California — a 7-hour drive from Murrieta, she said.

Not unlike others in attendance at the annual party, this marked the third year Linn brought her daughters. Linn explained that beyond the holiday event, the Davies have lent their support throughout the years since her daughters' father first signed on to the program.

“Mona and Bob have a lot of resources for the kids and myself so it really helps,” Linn said. “The girls love it.”

With one look around the bustling Elks Lodge dining room, those resources from various community groups and businesses were evident.

Volunteers on hand included Elks Lodge members Al and Mary Ann Kuk; Ankoma Hose, who headed up the gift tables for excited children to celebrate Christmas; Denise Ronzello and team from Shear Expressions Salon, who served food catered by New Life Culinary Creations; Sharyn Bennett, who lead the children's choir from Mountain View Church of Wildomar in performances of “The Little Drummer Boy” and “The Twelve Days of Christmas”; Ventriloquist Pamela Vasquez and Luke Gus, who sang and shared the Christmas story with children as they gathered up close; and Jaelin Neal of the Neal Brothers, who sang the National Anthem.

Yet others helped outside the Lodge with gift tables, including Cynthia Duran of Sewing and Craft Stories; Linda Dominguez of Girl Scouts Beyond Bars of San Geronio; Johnna Hose, Community Outreach Ministry's assistant Angel Tree coordinator, Vista Community Clinic brought its dental bus and provided dental assessments and prizes.

Other representatives from local agencies who contributed their time included Kevin Ferris of USFS, who brought Smokey and the firetruck; Murrieta Police Detective Joshua Rodriguez, who shared information on the police department's Explorer program as well as the California National Guard's Challenge Academy, SUNBURST, for teenagers at risk of dropping out of high school; and Temecula Valley Young Marines, who performed the Colors.

Debi Cortez and her team from Purses of Heaven filled bags with Dr. Mona Davies' book, “Children's Liberation From Incarceration,” and Angel Tree informational booklets. Cortez's organization also presented 30 mothers with purses, toiletries and gifts.

Meanwhile, students from Heritage High School Key Club and Murrieta Mesa High School Choir were volunteers and visited each of the booths to become acquainted with their organizations.

In all, children from 93 Southwest Riverside County families were served at the Christmas party, 57 percent of whom were girls and 43 percent whom were boys. Twenty-two percent were ages 14-18, 13 percent were ages 11-13, 40 percent were ages 5-10 and 25 percent were ages 0-4. Forty-seven percent were Hispanic, 39 percent were Caucasian, 12 percent were African American and 2 percent were Asian.

Businesses, agencies and individuals who sponsored gifts for the children were: Wells Fargo Inland Crossroads District; Elsinore Valley Municipal Water District (EVMWD); Shear Expressions Salon; Southland Arthritis and Rheumatology; Menifee Valley Curves for Women; Massage Envy Murrieta, Wildomar and Menifee; Nike Outlet Store; Wellness and More; Infiniti

Boutique; Dr. Jeff Prais Dental Office; Yolanda Burgess Bookkeeping; Temecula Sunrise Rotary Club; Mentor for Kids Ministry; State Farm Julie Ngo Temecula; YESplace and Ivy Springs.



Dr. Mona Davies (center), co-founder of Community Outreach Ministry, is pictured with sisters Isabella, 9, and Angelina, 8, whose father was sentenced to life in prison when they were infants. The sisters were among 200 served with gifts on behalf of their parents during the Wildomar nonprofits 17th annual Angel Tree Christmas Party, held Dec. 17, 2017 at Elks Lodge #2591 Lake Elsinore/Wildomar.



Destiny, 4, and her grandparents, Isabel and Joel Viramontes (left) and Donene Gagnon (right) received an invitation to Community Outreach Ministry's 17th annual Angel Tree party Sunday after Destiny's father registered for the Angel Tree program through Prison Fellowship. Both Destiny's parents are currently behind bars, said her grandparents, who share custody of their granddaughter.



Families posed for photos by the Christmas tree after receiving gifts at Community Outreach Ministry's 17th annual Angel Tree Christmas Party for children of incarcerated parents, held Sunday, Dec. 17 at Elks Lodge #2591 Lake Elsinore/Wildomar.



Children of incarcerated parents gather up close as ventriloquist Pamela Vasquez and Luke Gus share the Christmas story as part of Community Outreach Ministry's 17th annual Angel Tree Christmas Tree Party held Sunday, Dec. 17, 2017 at Elks Lodge #2591 Lake Elsinore/Wildomar.

#####