



Official Publication for the Town of Browning and the Blackfeet Reservation

## First ever Blackfeet Children's Christmas party a big success

**By TJ SHOW  
BTBC SECRETARY  
For the Glacier Reporter**  
On Dec. 30, over 1,000 kids of all ages showed up at the Chief Mountain Building for a day of fun, games, movies, crafts, snacks and treats at the first annual Blackfeet Children's Christmas Fund party. About 2,000 presents were given out, and there were drawings for 30 prizes including bicycles, scooters, play sets and gift certificates.

Not a penny of Tribal money was used for the event. All of the money came from 150 generous donors from every corner of America and as far away as Australia, Germany, Italy, England and Spain. Over 90% of the donations came from off the reservation.

A list of donors as well as over 100 photos from the event can be found at [www.blackfeetnation.com](http://www.blackfeetnation.com).

"An amazing thing happened this holiday season," said Blackfeet Chairman Willie A. Sharp Jr. "People from all over the world - most of whom have never been here and have never met us - opened their hearts and sent us money so our precious children could have a brighter, happier Christmas. From the bottom of our hearts, we thank our many friends for their goodwill, kindness and generosity. Thanks to them, I see the Children's Christmas party and gift handout becoming a big community institution on the reservation. In summer we have NAID; in winter we have this for our children."

The first year event so far exceeded all hopes and expectations that it will now become a permanent event, and plans are already underway to make next year bigger and better. Everyone seemed to like the Dec. 30 date because it gives the children something big and fun to look forward to in the otherwise slow

week after Christmas - sort of a second Christmas celebrated with all their friends. Also, holding the event after Christmas means that volunteers are more readily available, and presents can be purchased at better prices to stretch the budget farther.

The Dec. 30, 2011, party will move to a large auditorium and will shoot for 4,000 presents, drawings for 100 major prizes, many more activities, free professional-quality family photos, and busing from outlying areas such as Heart Butte, Babb, Seville, etc.

"What really brought home the importance of this event was what I saw when I went back to my office after helping hand out presents to the kids," noted Tribal Secretary TJ Show. "I saw a family walking home from the party, trudging through the snow in 10 degree weather. But the kids were happily clutching their presents and everyone was smiling and laughing. I know this family hadn't been able to afford much of a Christmas on their own, so to be able to help give those children something extra - and a big day of fun and excitement, too - moved me deeply and reminded me what my job really is: to help find ways to improve the lives of Tribal members in any and every way we can."

The idea for the Blackfeet Children's Christmas Fund is a new one, and was hatched in October when TJ and Willie asked Gregg Paisley, CEO of Chief Mountain Technologies, to find ways to harness our various email and website facilities to raise funds off the reservation. Gregg then asked George Kipp of Manpower to help organize the event and to provide the 501(c)(3) status. Fundraising commenced just after Thanksgiving.

Not a penny was spent on labor; this was a 100% volunteer effort. So of the ap-

proximately \$15,000 raised, every dollar went directly to presents, prizes, party expenses and thank you items for donors. But anyone who was at the party knows that there was about \$40,000 in presents there. That's because some donors sent in packages rather than cash, and our shoppers found ways to stretch the budget in amazing ways. For example, at 2 p.m. on Tuesday, Dec. 28, five Tribal members drove to Great Falls in SUVs and a pickup towing a large horse trailer, with cashiers' checks and money transfers. They went to every major store in town and wrangled, bargained and cherry picked, getting 50% to 80% off on the best items on the shelves. They returned to Browning at 5 a.m. the next morning with all the vehicles completely full of about 2,000 items. The pictures are on the website.

"Aside from the generosity of our donors, what made this event possible was the 40+ volunteers that came out of the woodwork to wrap presents, bake, set up the party, supervise the kids and clean up," noted Manpower Director George Kipp. "This was Blackfeet at their best: seeing what needed to be done and jumping in and doing it. It was like Santa's workshop getting the presents and party ready."

"Somebody asked me how we raised so much money so fast and pulled together such a large scale event with so little time," said Gregg Paisley. "I don't really know, and I am as surprised, humbled and awed as anyone at the incredible response and success. So I think the best answer is simply this. We all went about this with a good heart and a pure spirit. All we wanted was to do something good for our many children, and all of us were willing to give up as much time and energy as it took. So I think the Creator took it from there."



Elves, mice and flowers, along with some jungle animals, made up part of the vast scene of characters at last Christmas's KW Bergan School performance.

## East Glacier's Dusterhoff reflects on 25 years with Sheriff's Office

**By Briana Wipf  
For the Glacier Reporter**  
For nearly quarter of a century, Wayne Dusterhoff has dedicated himself to protecting and serving the residents of Glacier County. Dusterhoff, 65, is retiring as Glacier County Sheriff/Coroner and is confident he is leaving the Glacier County Sheriff's Office (GCSO) in the capable hands of his successor, Vernon "Napi" Billedeaux.

For the past seven years, Dusterhoff has served as the county's lead law enforcement officer. He was appointed sheriff in 2003, following the resignation of then sheriff, Gary Racine. In 2004 he was elected to fill out the remainder of Racine's unexpired term, and then in 2006, he was re-elected to a four-year term.

Although Dusterhoff said he's ready to hang up his badge, he isn't leaving without doing a little bragging about the GCSO officers, dispatchers and jailers. "I can't say enough about the quality of the people here. Glacier County is very lucky to have them," boasted Dusterhoff.

Dusterhoff has been diligent in pursuing countless grants to ensure his officers have the equipment they need to do their

job. He cited the recent addition of mobile data terminals to seven GCSO patrol cars, which were purchased with grant funds. Dusterhoff and his officers have done a lot of work to obtain grant money to help stretch local tax dollars and supplement the county's law enforcement budget.

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Outgoing Glacier County Attorney Larry Epstein and Glacier County Sheriff Coroner Wayne Dusterhoff were honored by the Glacier County Commissioners, co-workers and members of the public on Thursday, Dec. 23, after the swearing in ceremony of newly elected county officials.



Glacier County's elected officials were administered their oath of office during the official swearing in ceremony on Thursday, Dec. 23. Pictured above are, left to right, Glacier County Commissioner Michael DesRosier, Glacier County Attorney Carolyn Berkram, Glacier County Sheriff Vernon "Napi" Billedeaux, Glacier County Treasurer Kate Salois, and Glacier County Clerk and Recorder Glenda Hall. At right, singing Blackfeet honor songs at the ceremony were, left to right, Paul Old Chief, Kenneth Old Person and Earl



Many, many volunteers helped out setting up and conducting the Blackfeet Children's Christmas Party this year.

Some \$40,000 worth of Christmas merchandise was handed out at the first Blackfeet Children's Christmas Party to a very large number of reservation families.

