



Flashing lights on police cars inhibited people around Blackfeet country until they realized the trucks and paddy wagons came bearing gifts of the season.

Big Sky Furniture and Mini Storage

Open Monday - Saturday
10 a.m. - 5 p.m.
2600 Upper River Rd.
Great Falls, MT
453-0936

"For All Your Furniture Needs."

Children Christmas Fund tries something new with great results

By GREGG PAISLEY
For the Glacier Reporter

This year the Blackfeet Children Christmas Fund tried something new, and it worked out great. We started raising money after Thanksgiving like always, and folks all over the world started sending in their donations. But then on Dec. 14 the tragedy in Newtown occurred and all of a sudden 2012 didn't seem like the right year to have a huge, crazy party for the kids like we did in 2010 and 2011.

So we decided something lower-key and more personal for the kids would be good. We also wanted to reach younger kids, especially those from families with the greatest need. So with a quick rethink we decided to engage the police department, fire department, schools and social services entities to go door to door in the parts of town with the highest concentration of young kids.

In the past we spent almost all the money on toys, but this year we decided to use half our budget on winter boots, coats, hats, gloves, snow pants, large sleds (a big hit!), diapers and other practical items.

So on Sunday, Dec. 30, dozens of volunteers met at Browning City Hall and loaded up a large U-Haul truck and a police paddy wagon with gifts. Everyone met in the conference room and selected the target neighborhoods and headed out. At the same time the Police Chief took a load up to the Nurturing Center in his police SUV.

Our convoys showed up in the neighborhoods, emergency lights flashing and sirens blaring, with no advance warning. Firemen in full gear and policemen in uniform went door to door, first with small gifts like sparkling cider, hot chocolate, cookies and popcorn, and then invited the kids out to the trucks to choose big gifts.

You know, when a citizen looks out the window and sees

a dozen police and fire vehicles in front of their house with lights flashing, and then someone knocks on their door, their first thought is usually not: "Hurray, they must be here to give me gifts!" So it took a minute for households to realize what was happening, and then kids literally poured out into the street and mobbed the vehicles. It was a lot of fun for all.

One especially memorable moment occurred late in the operation, after dark, when the big U-Haul truck we had was empty and only the police paddy wagon had gifts left. A young boy, so excited to get to the action had run outside from a few doors down (in the bitter windy cold, across solid ice streets) in bare feet and a t-shirt. Browning's mayor, Lockley Bremner intercepted him and carried the boy over to the paddy wagon and held his feet off the ground while volunteers put boots and warm clothes on him, and gave him his choice of toys. Very sweet moment, and typical of what happened time and time again throughout the day.

I think all the volunteers agreed that what we did this year was better than a party in many ways. Our only regret was that we would have liked to keep going for a few more hours and visited more households. But we bought all the gifts we could with the money we had, and the gifts eventually ran out, so that was that. Hopefully next year we will have more money so we can do more.

On the other hand, our planning was pretty good. We were able to hit every house in the targeted neighborhoods, and we got a mountain of gifts into the hands of hundreds of kids who were caught completely by surprise. And the police and fire folks got a chance to interact with households in the nicest possible way. So all in all, a great success!



Gifts, toys and games came on wheels last month as the Blackfeet Tribe held its annual Christmas Drive, with home delivery on tap in this year's edition.

2 Day Specials

Thursday, January 24
and
Friday, January 25

PEPSI
Pepsi 6 Pack 24 oz. Bottles
Equal to 12-12 oz. cans
Limit 4 please
2/\$7

Beef Chuck Roast, Boneless
\$2.99 lb.

Lunchables
Oscar Mayer Assort. Lunchables
4.3 oz.
10/\$10

10 lb. White Potatoes
2/\$3

Coca-Cola
Coca Cola 12 Packs
3/\$12

Shoppers Value Snack Chips
4/\$5

TEEPLES IGA

No sales to dealers.
Supplies limited to stock on hand.
Quantity rights reserved.
Not responsible for typographical errors.

338-2165
Browning