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Holiday Gift Giving

Kelli Joy O'Laughlin Memorial Foundation

“JOY”

The picture tells it all. Our two little elves with their smiles, their warmth and the “JOY” to be part of the 2018 Holiday Gift Giving. Their names are Norah (7) and Maddie (4). They are Kelli's nieces.



We arrived at Maryville Recreational Center with Sister Cathy waiting at the door to greet us with open arms. Sister gathered a few of the counselors to help unload the first group of presents for the girls of Casa Esperanza Homes.

Casa Esperanza

There were 20 Spanish-speaking girls who came from Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador, Ecuador and Nicaragua. The girls did not know one another until they met at Maryville.

They are amazing & beautiful in so many ways.

Maryville's Casa Esperanza and San Francisco Programs provide temporary shelter care and family reunification services for immigrant children primarily from Central America. The children are between the ages of 13 and 17 and have arrived at the border unaccompanied by an adult.

Gifts



The **“JOY”** that you brought to their eyes when they received a gift was priceless! The majority of these beautiful girls had never received a Christmas gift. They were forever grateful! The handmade card says it all! “Christmas is...Not just opening presents. ...its opening your hearts”!



Girls Opening Their Gifts



Making a Difference

Pictured are some of the young ladies from Casa Salama home (picture left) who have had a history of childhood trauma and with both an intellectual disability and mental illness. Maryville is making a difference for these young girls by building a stable and healthy relationship with staff and each other.

Norah looks on to see the **“JOY”** on the girl’s faces while opening their gifts.

Girls from the Imani Homes (not pictured) were young moms with babies. There was one baby that was only 9 days old. The little one was absolutely beautiful as well as the mom. They were very grateful for all the gifts they received for their babies and for themselves.

San Francisco Boys



The young boys, just like the girls from Casa Esperanza, came from countries in South America. Three of the elves Maddie, Norah and Amy were ready to meet the young boys and to bring them **“JOY”** and happiness during the Holiday Season. Maddie started to pass out the presents. One of the presents many received was a plastic card and they were not sure what it was. We made sure the counselors told the boys they are **“GIFT CARDS”**. For the ones that received a wallet, they immediately put the gift card in the wallet. As you can see the young boys had the attention of our two little elves. The boys were extremely grateful. One boy kept his wrapped presents until he got back to his room. We were told, “those gifts were his first and wanted to open them in private.



St. Monica Program –For Mothers in Recovery with their children

Surprised, Excitement & Patience

We arrived at MRP with a truck and SUV filled with gifts for the moms and children. The surprised look on their faces was priceless when carrying in all the presents. To see the children’s eyes light up was priceless.



The excitement and “JOY” watching the eyes of the children looking at the names on the presents to see if they are able to see a present for them. Melissa (friend of Kelli) holding baby Lorenzo while the mom gets a bottle for the baby. Maddie and Norah were ready for a second day of gift giving. A mom opening her present while her sons anxiously wait to see her gift.



Children’s Healthcare Center

Thankful

The moms and children were so grateful and could not thank everyone enough. It became emotional when some of the Moms started to talk about the Holiday Gift Giving and how much this meant to them. One mom said. “I am amazed that people could love and give so much to someone that you didn’t even know”. For some of the moms this was their first Christmas present!

This was our last stop of the Holiday Gift Giving. A stop that is very uplifting. The center is a long-term care facility that provides specialized clinical care for medically fragile or medically complex children. The children have suffered an accident or illness and now require transition care. The children at the center can be from newborn through 21. One of the little girls age 2 came in so fragile and difficulty walking. The nurses worked with her day in and day out and now she is running and smiling around the hallways. She followed us throughout the whole gift giving which was such a “JOY” to see her flourish.

“JOY”

We will never be able to say “**THANK YOU**” enough. The “**JOY**” that you brought to the children and families of Maryville will not be forgotten. For many, this is the very first Holiday Gift they have ever received.

The Kelli Joy O’Laughlin Memorial Foundation is forever grateful for your small act of kindness and giving. Keeping Kelli’s memory alive and what she so loved to do during the Holiday’s means the world to so many. “**THANK YOU**” from the bottom of our hearts!



Kelli Joy O’Laughlin Memorial Foundation

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