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Brentwood Regional Community Chest distributes food, toys to families in need

Dec 23, 2021



The East County nonprofit Brentwood Regional Community Chest spread holiday cheer during its annual food and toy distribution event at Brentwood Elementary School on Dec. 18.

Over 350 needy families from Brentwood, Knightsen, Byron and Discovery Bay were given full turkey dinners, and those among them with children were also given age-appropriate toys during the drive-through distribution.

"It was one of the best days of the year," said Dana Eaton, superintendent of the Brentwood Union School District and a Brentwood Regional Community Chest member.

Each year, containers situated throughout East County in advance of the holidays are filled with donations of toys and non-perishable food items, and volunteers sort and package the goods for the event.

Eaton estimated that about 50 volunteers were on hand during the giveaway this year, and another 100 had helped with the donation collection and sorting.

The effort brought smiles to both volunteers and recipients, said volunteer Ian Cohen. "I am out here supporting the community and helping amazing Brentwood," he said. "I am so glad we got them their turkey and their toys for a great Christmas."

Fellow volunteer Esme Bruesewitz said that the event brought her joy. At its conclusion, she said she felt energized. "That spirit of Christmas gives you the energy," she said.

The Brentwood Regional Community Chest was founded over 50 years ago by the late Rose Pierce. Her daughter, Lill Pierce, has carried the tradition forward.

For Lill, little can compete with the reward of helping families in need. "I love it," she said. "This is my favorite day of the year."