

This is Erin Dunn from the Fortuna Chamber of Commerce with a Community Comment.

Merry Christmas Eve!

I want to take this moment to tell you about one of the most moving evenings I experienced this holiday season. There were no reporters at the event so I want to share it with you.

The event was called Shop With a Hero and it took place in Fortuna a week or so ago.

It was a partnership between two service clubs, a private foundation, business, the school system and very special volunteers--a text book collaboration.

100 students from Fortuna Elementary School District and Loleta School District, ages 8 to 10, were invited to go Christmas shopping for their families at Fortuna ACE Hardware. They were provided with a \$50 coupon to shop for mom, dad, sister-and-or-brother. This night wasn't about what they wanted for Christmas, it was about sharing the wonderful experience of giving.

Local "heroes" accompanied one or two kids into the store to help them shop. Volunteers from the Fortuna Fire Dept., Loleta Fire Dept., CHP, Fortuna Police Department, the high school football team and Rotarians walked the aisles of the store with the kids and helped them as they picked out presents for their family members.

When they were finished with their shopping, they took their goodies to the back room where a team of Rotarians carefully

wrapped their packages. While the presents were being wrapped, the kids wrote thank you notes to the sponsors.

I was curious about what kids picked out to give as presents. One boy picked out a bag of nails for his dad. His dad is working on a fence at home so that makes all kinds of sense. I saw rolls of duct tape in several baskets—you can't go wrong with duct tape! Some kids picked out fresh flowers for mom, hot wheels and games for brother and sister. You name it, it was in a basket somewhere!

Many thanks to Fortuna ACE Hardware. Not only did they donate to the shopping, they also gave a huge discount at the register so \$50 went a very long way. Plus they provided check out staff and floor help to work the extra hours for this event--the shopping happened after the store was closed. Thanks to Fortuna and Fortuna Sunrise Rotary for putting on the event—and to Crescent City Rotary for sharing this idea. Thank you to the McLean Foundation, who offered to make up any gap in the funding. A special thanks to Rex Bohn and I'm not really at liberty to say why. But I will say this—he looks fantastic in red.

And finally, thanks to the school coordinators who helped get the word out to the families. Since Thanksgiving was so late this year we had a very small window of time to get the signed permission slips back in to the office.

There's a YouTube video called Fortuna Sunrise Rotary Shop with a Hero to watch if you want to get a feel for this special evening. Here's to a happy and healthy 2014!

This is Erin Dunn with a community comment.