

Migrant Christmas Fiesta

Twelve years ago, Adolph Diaz realized that some migrant children were not receiving Christmas presents, and that many who were getting presents were receiving used toys that were often unsanitary and posed health risks to the children. Having been a migrant child himself, this situation hit home for him, and he decided to do something about it.

Diaz decided he wanted to raise money in order to buy new toys for the migrant children of Northern Colorado. He was able to raise five hundred dollars for the first Christmas Fiesta to be held for the migrant families, and it was held at Valley High School in Gilcrest, Colorado. Over 150 migrant children received new toys for Christmas. The amount of funds raised and the number of children served at each Fiesta doubled consistently each year.

Eight years ago, Diaz was able to secure the cooperation of The Community Foundation Serving Greeley and Weld County. Diaz said one of the main benefits to working through the Foundation is the accountability they provide. The Foundation receives all donations being made to the Fiesta and provides donors with the tax receipts and other paperwork necessary for tax purposes; they ensure that all money being donated goes directly to the Migrant Children Fiesta and scholarship program.

At each Fiesta, the children are greeted by one of twelve Santas wishing them a “Feliz Navidad” or Merry Christmas. The children are given the opportunity to have their picture taken with Santa before receiving many books and finally receiving their very own Christmas present wrapped in festive paper from Santa himself. For many children, this gift will be the only one they receive for Christmas. For that reason, many of the kids take their present home to put it under the tree to be opened on Christmas day.

Through the years the Fiesta has grown exponentially. The largest fiesta to date included no less than eighteen Santa’s who gave presents to 2,200 migrant children. This program has made a huge impact in Northern Colorado, and it now provides presents for children from Greeley, Ft. Lupton, Ft. Morgan, Burlington, and more.

Because of the growth of the Fiesta and the increase in donations, Diaz was also able to start a scholarship program for the children. This program recognizes outstanding migrant children in elementary grades, and provides a small scholarship to every migrant child who graduates from high school in the designated area schools with the scholarship amounts dependent upon their GPA at graduation. The program also recognizes outstanding teachers in the area for their contributions to the education of the migrant children.

This amazing program has made a tremendous impact on the lives of many people, and they have shown their appreciation for Diaz’s efforts by nominating him for numerous awards for volunteerism including the 7News’ *7 Everyday Heroes* Award, 9News’ *9 Who Care* award, and the Greeley Tribune’s *Unsung Hero* Award. Diaz thanks his supporters including School District 6, Centennial BOCES, the Weld County Clerk Reporter, the members of the Events Board, and especially the Community Foundation Serving Greeley and Weld County. Without the help of all these team members, Diaz says this wonderful program would not be possible.

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