

125 Sarasota children 'shop with a cop' for free Christmas presents



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https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NQv50taG5_M

SARASOTA, Fla. (WFLA) – Wish lists came to life during the Sarasota Police Department's annual Shop with a Cop event on Saturday, giving 125 children a police-escorted shopping spree.

"This is really an opportunity for us as police officers to really interact with the kids," Sarasota Police Chief Rex Troche said. "Quite often we're called to situations like 911 calls, and so there's a lot of things going on. This is really an opportunity to show these kids we're just regular people."

Each child was allowed to pick out anything they wanted in the store, with their bill at the end taken care of.

"A lot of kids make up a Christmas list and they expect to get most, if not everything, on their list," said William Russell, CEO of the Housing Authority. "These kids, that's not the case. They don't have big expectations for all the things they want under the tree."

The Sarasota Housing Authority organizes and raises money for the event. Each child receives \$150 to spend on presents.

"He was 6 years old, so he was very focused, and he had pretty much a list that he was going for," Officer Danny Robbins said. "Football, soccer ball, Nerf balls — so it was pretty neat to see the excitement they were showing."

Russell told 8 On Your Side that the joyful spirit of giving can become contagious.

"I see kids actually going to pick out stuff for their parents," Russell said. "They're not just getting gifts for themselves, but they know mom needs something. 'I'm going to use my \$150 to get mom something.'"

Leaders of the event said they will be back next year to spread some more Christmas magic. Organizers with the housing authority said they choose different children each year, focusing on families with the most need.

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