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AROUND AURORA

COUNTY'S PROGRAM HELPS BRIGHTEN UP HOLIDAYS FOR MORE THAN 200 FAMILIES

By ADAM GOLDSTEIN
 THE AURORA SENTINEL

AURORA | Julie Schilling said she couldn't hold back the tears when she saw the gifts delivered.

Schilling, the co-coordinator for Arapahoe County's Adopt a Family program, was on hand at the county's CentrePoint Building on Dec. 8 to watch the gifts be delivered. A mother from Arapahoe County who received Christmas gifts as part of the program, which is set to distribute presents to 202 local families, was overjoyed at the amount of goods that she received as part of the gift package.

Apparently, the response was contagious.

"Basically, she came in to get her gifts. We said, 'Such-and-such a family — you get three bags.' She went into back, came out with these three humongous bags filled with gifts and she started crying," Schilling said. "She said, 'I thought you meant three Safeway bags. That was my most touching moment of the day, because I was crying with her.'"

Now in its eighth year, the Adopt a Family program seeks to provide needy families with more than just basic care items. According to Schilling, recipients are recommended by case workers and other staff from the county's Department of Health and Human Services. Families who qualify fill out both a wish list and a needs list. While the needs list includes basic items like clothing, blankets and comforters, the wish list can include something like a new bicycle.

"We want them to be able to also remain hopeful and wish for things," Schilling said.

This year, the program drew donations from more than 180 individuals and businesses. Pam Miles, an operations analyst for Aurora-based Merrick & Company was on hand on Dec. 8 to deliver gifts for more than 50 individuals from 13 families from the company.

Merrick said she pushed the company to participate in the program for its positive and widespread effect in the community. While this is the first year that Merrick & Company has participated, Miles said that she was already planning donations for next year.

"I already have my plan for next year," Miles said. "I'm ready to help again."



ABOVE: Barry Durhman of US Bank delivers donated gifts from Merrick & Co. at the 8th Annual Arapahoe County Adopt a Family program on Dec. 8 at the Arapahoe County CentrePoint Building in Aurora.



LEFT: Kamran Kinoshita, adolescent case worker with Arapahoe County, organizes donated gifts at the 8th Annual Arapahoe County Adopt a Family program on Dec. 8 at the Arapahoe County CentrePoint Building in Aurora.

Heather A. Longway/
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