**Hello Everyone,**

We did it again! We served our West Chicago community with love, Christmas gifts, and the hospitality of Christ this season. In fact, I have a quick report for you, thanks to our amazing committee members, our photographers, and Isabella Casimiro (our writer, a student, graduate of Puente).

It is a privilege to witness three congregations coming together as one body in Christ. I’m so grateful for such a collaborative effort. It was emotional for me as this is my last Christmas store in West Chicago. In order to equip our supporting churches to communicate in tomorrow’s services about the Christmas Store, I am sending this quick format report with photos. You can expect the final report from Saul in two weeks.

*The Christmas Store is an opportunity for families in our community to purchase new donated gifts at discounted prices so that they can share an affordable Christmas celebration with their children. Thank you for your donations and prayers.*

 **TODAY:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

* **Number of families served by the store: 180**
* **Number of children served by the store: 472**
* **A total of 1500 Gifts sold**
* **3 local businesses joined in and got involved by offering drop-off boxes or donating monetarily.**
* **Number of volunteers that served: 189 people served for a total of 1,022 hours!!**

**Volunteer teams included people from:**

* Iglesia del Pueblo
* Community Fellowship
* Wheaton Bible Church (High School Life, and 3 life groups)
* Chicago Eagles Soccer Club

The store was organized by a multi-church leadership committee.

**Spiritual Outcomes Report- IdP (hospitality room):**

* Our Hospitality team prayed for 109 specific prayer requests with shoppers
* 9 families joyfully accepted our invitation to Christmas Services at IDP
* Among the prayer requests we received, people asked for prayer for their marriages, divorces, health (people struggling with complicated health issues), mental health, drug abuse, job loss, home stabilization, incarcerated family members, and immigration issues.
* 100 % of the cards had excellent reviews about their experience shopping in the store.
* 20 bibles were given away
* 1 person received Christ as their Lord and Savior

**Here are a few stories (written by Isabella Casimiro – a graduate of Puente del Pueblo) and links for pictures:**

**Lupe (Shopper)**

Lupe has two children––a nine-year-old girl and an eleven-year-old boy––and is attending the Christmas Store for her third year. She first learned about the Christmas Store through Puente del Pueblo, at the after-school program. Lupe says:

*My motivation in coming is, first, they help economically because the prices are much better here than at any other store. Secondly, I think that by coming to the Store we are helping the Church gather funds for other programs. They use all that money they gather for other programs where there is need. Aside from the economic help, I can give my kids gifts for Christmas.*

*I want to thank the Christmas Store for being part of the team and for making this happen because, without them, this wouldn’t have been possible.*

**Maria (Shopper)**

Maria has three children––a 25-year-old son, a 12-year-old boy, and a 10-year-old girl. She was shopping for her two younger boys for a fourth time. She also first learned about the Christmas Store through Puente del Pueblo. Maria shared a bit of her story with us:

*I first came to the Store when I was told they were going to make the gifts much cheaper. I said to myself, “Well, let’s check this out.” I loved everything: the deals, the people, and the gifts. So, since then, I’ve decided to come to the Store for several years. Everyone is so kind and they tell us that if we have any sort of problem, they have us in their prayers. They are always asking us if we can be in their prayers.*

Much like everyone else, Maria has suffered throughout this past year with the pandemic. She was out of a job for almost nine months. Her husband kept his job, but that wasn’t enough to support their family. They’ve struggled to pay rent and to keep their children safe from the pandemic. Maria continues:

*When it's the same toy at the store for 50 dollars and they have it here for 15 then I’m going to buy it here to make my girl smile. That’s a blessing and I thank God for giving all these families the opportunity to make their kids smile with one or two toys. We can do that here and not at other stores.*

**Mark (Volunteer)**

Mark was a cashier at the Christmas Store, his first-time volunteering at the Store. He first heard about the Store through a friend at church and registered to volunteer right away. Mark comes from Panama City, Panama. Mark shared his thoughts with us:

*I wanted to serve in the community, to network, connect with people, and make new friends. What I would say to people is “Come and see what this is all about.” The Storeis about sharing, connecting with people, and serving the community.*

*My experience with the Store has been great. It has been awesome. I get to see people smiling through their masks even though I can’t physically see the smile. I can see it in their eyes, and you know they’re smiling. You can see the joy of having the gift for their kids. That’s why it has been the best experience working with people from the church community. So far, my most memorable experience has been seeing someone with a lot of gifts because you can see the joy in their face.*

**Amy (Volunteer)**

Amy was a gift wrapper trainer, floor walker, and sometimes runner. She has been volunteering at the Christmas Store for at least a decade. Amy first heard about the Store through Community Fellowship in West Chicago. Amy says:

*My favorite part of the Christmas Store is the fact that the Store allows parents to give gifts with dignity. I’ve personally struggled with being able to get gifts and I wanted to make sure that the stress is not there for others. What I want shoppers to take from this Store is that they are loved, and I hope that we have been able to make their holiday a bit easier. We hope that they are living the reason for this season.*

From all the times she has volunteered, Amy vividly remembers a memorable moment of the Christmas Store that has impacted her emotionally:

*Last year, during the pandemic, people were so economically impacted. One mother found a fluffy pink sweater that was on her daughter’s Christmas list, and it brought her to tears. It also brought me to tears watching it happen!*

**Sarai (Shopper)**

Sarai has six children––an 18-year-old son, a 15-year-old boy, a 13-year-old boy, an 11-year-old boy, a 10-year-old boy, and a 6-year-old girl–– and she was shopping for all her kids except the oldest. This is her fourth time participating in the Christmas Store. Much like the other shoppers, Sarai first heard about the Christmas Store through Puente del Pueblo and was referred by Rosie. Sarai says:

*We found everything here to be at a reasonable price and good quality toys. We were able to get a bicycle and that was the best part of today’s moments. We were able to get backpacks, Legos, a blanket, and dolls for our little girl. The Store offers a lot of variety, and they are so kind for doing this. I want to thank the Christmas Store team for being so kind to us.*

**Links for pictures:**

1. <https://share.icloud.com/photos/0hGHdaxNJ7nk6phKr88-YKIWQ>
2. <https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1DlmewX-Emj-aPJ_OPyS8PrIhRnOu52T8?usp=sharing>

There is more to come in the final report. Thanks to all for another amazing Christmas Store day, and for your ongoing passion and commitment to local ministry!! To God be the glory!

Blessings & Merry Christmas,

**Rosie Delgado & Saul Flores**

**Christmas Store Committee Chair & PDP Director**