

# MEMORANDUM

## MENDING Poverty

**“Miracle on San Fernando Road”** happens with the Annual Christmas Program at MEND. This year, we assisted 1275 families, and of those, 272 families were adopted by various community groups. The major push came the week before Christmas when the *Santa’s Toyland* opened on the second floor of MEND, and food and blanket distribution occurred concurrently in the lobby. Parents enjoyed selecting free toys, assisted by volunteer helpers, and received two toys per child plus new books. The most needy families who were adopted received additional gifts such as clothing and household items as well as toys and food, all of which were delivered directly to their homes by their adopters. From October to November alone, there were over 900 volunteers that assisted with the MEND Christmas Program, with many more coming in December!



### A Basket of Love: Heidi’s Story

One of the clients adopted this year is Heidi, a single mother of an 8-year old and a newborn baby. She faces overwhelming challenges of taking care of her two sons while living with spina bifida, “a birth defect that involves the incomplete development of the spinal cord.” Being adopted through the MEND holiday program could not have come at a better time. Unable to deal with the disease, Heidi’s husband abandoned her while pregnant, forcing her to move in with her brothers where six family members now live. She hopes to start a new chapter in her life while enjoying this holiday season with the help from her adopters. During a home visit, she expressed her utmost gratitude towards MEND and its volunteers for helping her through such a difficult time in her life.



### Founding Fathers: Mr. Lenny Rostant

Lenny Rostant has been part of the Annual MEND Christmas Program from its very first year in the early 1970’s. Retired and now in his late 80’s, Lenny still volunteers with the program doing mainly behind-the-scenes tasks. But he remembers the early years when he was the front man doing the heavy lifting of boxes and driving around town to pick up donations. He described how the program started in his neighbors’ garage, then moving on to a store warehouse and now the MEND Center. Lenny has seen it all from being the Co-Chair of the Program to a volunteer gift sorter. When asked about his involvement, Lenny replied, “I have really enjoyed the Christmas Program over the years from its inception and seeing it become so efficient. It is doing a tremendous job and I hope it continues in the future.”



### CSUN Food and Clothing Drive to Benefit MEND

CSUN students added to MEND’s Christmas Program by collecting more than 2,500 donated food items and 1,500 clothing items. A large group of these students also assisted with home visits to Christmas applicants in November. The *Unified We Stand Volunteer Program* at CSUN organized the projects for MEND, and an event on November 19 showcased to the rest of the student population their work in volunteerism. The collected items were displayed on the steps of the Oviatt Library which attracted students to join the force and sign up to volunteer.

*Thanks to volunteer writer Young-Ji Lee and volunteer photographer Pat Hall for developing this update!*