Deschutes Sheriffâ€™s Shop-With-a-Cop Program Preparations Underway

by Bend Weekly News Sources

Planning and preparations for the 2006 Deschutes County Sheriffâ€™s Office Shop-With-a-Cop program are now underway. The events will be held Tuesday, December 12th at the Bend Wal-Mart, and Thursday, December 14 at the Redmond Wal-Mart.

Developed locally in Deschutes County by the Sheriffâ€™s Office, Shop-with-a-Cop is joint venture between law enforcement agencies throughout Deschutes County and local Wal-Mart stores. Its primary focus is to make the holidays brighter for less fortunate families and provides an opportunity for children to engage in positive police interaction. This will be the sixth year this event has taken place. In 2005, 94 school-aged children (grades 1-12) participated in the program, shopping for approximately 576 family members, including something special for themselves. Monetary support for the program in 2005 was just over $25,000.

Children are referred by local law enforcement School Resource Officers, FAN (Family Access Network) advocates and the Central Oregon Partnerships for Youth (COPY) program, which provides mentors for children of incarcerated parents. The selected students are picked up by officers at their respective schools and driven to Wal-Mart, where the students participate in a â€œone-on-oneâ€• shopping experience with their officer. While gifts are being wrapped, the students have the opportunity to have lunch, donated by the in-store McDonaldâ€™s.

Although this program is coordinated by the Deschutes County Sheriffâ€™s Office, its continued success stems from the participation of officers from all law enforcement agencies in Deschutes County. In addition, public support of the program in the form of monetary donations and volunteer support has been overwhelmingly positive, and we hope to continue that tradition in this yearâ€™s program.

A â€œhotlineâ€• number with basic information about the program has been established at 550-4880, along with the option of leaving a name and phone number if callers need more information. If citizens wish to make a monetary contribution to Shop-With-a-Cop, they can drop them off at the main Sheriffâ€™s Office in Bend, or at any of the Sheriffâ€™s Officeâ€™s substations in La Pine, Sisters or Terrebonne. Checks, made payable to â€œWal-Martâ€•, can also be mailed to: Deschutes County Sheriff's Office, Attn: Shop-With-a-Cop Program, 63333 West Highway 20, Bend, Oregon 97701.

Following is a story that a FAN advocate related about a little girl they connected to the Shop-With-a-Cop program last year: â€œA gangly, slightly awkward first grader, she was afraid of the police. Earlier in the year, her father was arrested and put in jail. Through the Family Access Network, she was connected to the Shop-With-a-Cop program, which gives children an opportunity to see the police officers as caring and helpful people.

This little girl, with her self-cut bangs and slightly crooked glasses, was excited to go shopping and could hardly make it through the school day. She was all nervous wiggles and smiles when she met the officer, and she beamed as she climbed into the patrol car. She was treated to a shopping trip that helped her whole family for the holidays.â€•

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