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60,000 Toys (valued at nearly \$1 million) Received & Donated *Children's Fund's 33rd Annual Toy Drive Supported by First 5, Community Members*

SAN BERNARDINO – December 20, 2021 – Over the past three weeks, thousands of toys and gifts have been brought to a cold warehouse in preparation for distribution to children in San Bernardino County. Wearing heavy coats, hats, gloves and masks, volunteers and staff have been cataloging, sorting, taking note of wishes and gathering up shopping carts full of specifically requested toys for local organizations, preschools, county organizations and churches to provide for children in need.

On Friday, Joly and Jesse Ramirez, church members at Set Free Church in Highland, backed up their empty rented U-Haul van to the warehouse doors where Children's Fund staff and volunteers were working. "We appreciate this a lot," said Jesse as the truck was being filled to the top with toys. "So many low-income families are in need, and they are hurting."

The Ramirez's are preparing for the church's upcoming Christmas Extravaganza event where over 400 kids are expected to attend. "This is what it's all about, and it's all worth it to bless a kid," Ramirez concluded.

"For some children, the only gift under the tree this year will be a Celebration of Giving toy from Children's Fund," said Dr. Ciriaco "Cid" Pinedo, president & CEO of Children's Fund. "With the vital support of our donors, we ensure they are not forgotten." Pinedo explains 26% of the children living in San Bernardino County live in poverty. Those families use their limited resources for food, shelter and basic needs. Often, there isn't enough left over for holiday gifts.

Children's Fund has facilitated the Annual Celebration of Giving Toy Drive for 33 years. Additionally, for the past 15 years, First 5 San Bernardino has been a major funder of the Children's Fund organization, also providing a \$50,000 donation each year to augment and ensure that children 0-5 years old have a present for Christmas.

"For a child, not having a gift at Christmastime would be devastating," said Executive Director Karen Scott, First 5 San Bernardino. "It's vital to a child's health and wellbeing to feel love, and we are so proud to partner with Children's Fund to make the holidays special for the county's young children," Scott concluded.

Over 30 volunteers and nine full time staff help put the toy operation together including Amy Pond Cirelli, Children's Fund program coordinator. "Running the Celebration of Giving warehouse is the highlight of my year," said Cirelli. "Knowing that so many children will be happy on Christmas morning, well, it is a really good feeling."

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About Children's Fund

Founded in 1986 by the Honorable Patrick Morris, the late Jack H. Brown, and Co-founder A. Gary Anderson, Children's Fund is a nonprofit whose mission is giving our vulnerable children support, opportunity, and hope by breaking destructive cycles through community partnerships. Last year, Children's Fund provided more than 110,000 services to children in need in San Bernardino County and since its inception has facilitated over 1.75 million points of service to children and families. For more information on Children's Fund or to learn how you can give a child hope for brighter tomorrows, go to www.childrensfund.org or call 909.379.0000.

About First 5 San Bernardino

First 5 San Bernardino's distinct purpose is to improve the lives of young children and their families by giving them the best possible start in life. For the past 23 years, First 5 San Bernardino has been working dynamically through strategic partnerships to promote, support and enhance the health and early development of children prenatal through age 5, their families and communities. Funded through the 1998 voter-approved initiative, California Children and Families Act (Proposition 10 tobacco tax revenues), First 5 San Bernardino has evolved into a system where stakeholders and services are integrated, coordinated and sustainable, and one that families experience as accessible, inclusive and equitable. For more information, visit First5SanBernardino.org.