

Kids go Christmas shopping with deputies

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BY JORDAN TRAVIS

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GRAND HAVEN TOWNSHIP — In the toy department of the Walmart store in Grand Haven Township on Monday evening, 9-year-old Landon Barrett explained to Ottawa County Sheriff's Sgt. Lee Sandoval how to use "Paper Jamz."



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Barrett, one of 34 children to participate in the second annual "Shop with a Sheriff," picked up the guitar-shaped electronic toy and strummed a few notes. Sandoval said he was impressed.

Sandoval was one of several Ottawa County deputies who took children like Landon and his 13-year-old brother, Killian, through the store and helped them pick Christmas gifts for themselves and for their family. Their selections were paid for through donations raised by Walmart and Sheriff's Department personnel, Sgt. Valerie Weiss said.

School officials from districts throughout Ottawa County referred families to the program, Weiss said.

Weiss said Walmart Store Manager Ron Shoop was instrumental in organizing the program.

"He got with his employees and raised a lot of money," she said.

The Michigan Sheriff's Association and the Ottawa County Deputy Sheriff's Association also contributed funds. This year, Grand Haven Area Public Schools helped by referring families to the program and making a financial contribution, Weiss said.

"It's a great opportunity to help some needy children in the community," Shoop said. "This is the fun part of my job — teaming up with the local community and helping families in need."



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Sandoval said this was his first year helping children shop for the program, and said he thought it was "absolutely great."

When Mark Trier saw the families and deputies gathered near the front of the store on Monday, he found out what was happening and decided to help by donating money.

"That's what people are supposed to do," the Nunica man said.

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