

# ***GFWC Contemporary Women of North County***

## **Project Detail**

**Project:** Christmas Party for Children at Casa de Amparo

**Project Chair:** Laura McPhee

**Project Description:** In our country a child is abused every minute and more than 125,000 calls are placed annually to the Child Abuse Hotline in San Diego County. Casa de Amparo, or Casa, is a shelter for children who have been removed from their homes due to abuse or neglect. Casa's mission is to provide safe shelter and a continuum of prevention and treatment services to abused, neglected and at risk infants, children and teens and their families in San Diego County. With Christmas being a special time of the year for children Contemporary Women of North County would bring a little bit of Christmas spirit to the kids at Casa by throwing a Christmas Party.

**Establish Contact & Concurrence:** I contacted the main telephone number for Casa and was forwarded to the Director. After speaking to the Director and sharing the project goal, the Director spoke to our members at a monthly meeting and shared Casa's mission. The Director had the opportunity to meet our members and establish a relationship, providing a comfort and trust level with us and our goals. I was then told to contact the Events Coordinator who helped me understand the children and their needs, and any special requirements such as: their limited attention span, two parties would be needed one for kids up to 12 years and one for teens, no pictures of children may be removed from the premises, and counselors will always be present.

**Determine Specifics:** The basic project objectives were outlined: throw a Christmas party that would let the Casa children have some memorable Christmas experiences, with the excitement of Santa and gifts, and a little relief from the everyday life at the shelter. These objectives were presented to our Club members.

1. Provide a gift and stuffed animal for each child
2. Provide the material for, and teach the making of one or two craft items
3. Have pre-made cookies available for the Children to decorate
4. Provide a stocking with small items for the children
5. Take a picture with Santa and provide a Christmas photo ornament
6. Provide lunch

Club members brainstormed and determined how we could meet all of these objectives. We would contact businesses to obtain as many donated items as possible. We would throw two parties at the same time at Casa, one for teens and one for the younger children. We would teach the teens how to macramé providing the material to make a bracelet and keychain. The younger children will paint sun catcher frames and color. Both parties will have pizza and drinks for lunch with pre-made cookies that they can decorate and eat. Based on input from the shelter, each child will get a stuffed animal, CD player, and Santa will give them a stocking full of small items. Photos will be taken of each child alone and with Santa. We will place one photo in a photo ornament for each child and other photos will be given to the children for their scrapbook (which the shelter provides). It will be held at the shelter in their activity rooms from 11am to 1pm and we'll play Christmas music. Everyone will help set up the rooms before the parties start and Sub-Chairs were established to handle the different activities: one for the craft items, one for the cookie decorating, and one to handle the photo taking.

**Determine Requirements and Action Plan:** We determined we would need a minimum of eight volunteers to help with the event, at least four at each party. We would set up stations for each activity: one for the craft items, one for cookie decorating, and one for taking their photos. Lunch would be provided after the activities and then Santa would visit and each child would get their picture taken. Club budgeted \$500 for the project, with a large emphasis on getting donations.

Supplies needed:

1. paper goods (plates, napkins, paper towels) for 25 children, six counselors and volunteers
2. pizza, fruit drinks and water to serve children, counselors and volunteers (have someone deliver pizza so it is warm)
3. craft materials for the 25 children (13 teens and 12 under the age of 12)
4. CD player, stuffed animal, photo ornament, stocking with small items for each child
5. 6 dozen pre-made Christmas cookies, frosting and sprinkles for cookies
6. music for each room, tablecloths and decorations
7. arrange for a volunteer Santa

We determined the best day to hold the event and coordinated that date with Casa. We ensured that the two rooms at Casa would be available that day and made sure Casa understood exactly what we were doing. We had to sign an agreement stating that we understood all of Casa special requirements. A sign-up sheet was distributed at our meeting asking for volunteers and then we were ready to go. Planning starts in October and then our President would continue to have this project on the agenda to discuss as needed.

### **Project Results & Benefits:**

The Christmas Party has been extremely rewarding for our members. The children seem to enjoy their party and it really warms the heart to hear the kids scream with excitement. In addition to the Christmas excitement the children build confidence by accomplishing the craft items and having the opportunity to interact more. The individual we got to help out as Santa wants to come back every year. We have continued to throw a Christmas Party for the past five years. Members came up with creative ways to obtain donations for needed items. Our President asked for donations on her birthday in lieu of gifts, and another member asked for donations at her workplace. This was all in addition to member contributions. Each year we evaluate what works and what doesn't work so that we can make the next year even better.

After throwing the Christmas Party for a few years, establishing both trust and confidence with Casa, Contemporary Women of North County has been asked to help with Casa's annual Crystal Ball. It has also opened the door to additional community service opportunities. We are currently planning a cooking class for teens at Casa, helping to provide life skills they can take with them as they move into adult life.