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► [Safety](#)

► [Pressroom](#) (web)

► [Ask the CEO](#)

► [CEO Forum](#)

► [Employee Recognition](#)

► [Employee Activities](#)

► [Metro Projects](#)

► [Facts at a Glance](#)
(web)

► [Archives](#)

► [Events Calendar](#)

► [Research Center/ Library](#)

► [Metro Classifieds](#)

► [Bazaar](#)

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► [30/10 Initiative](#)

► [Policies](#)

► [Training](#)

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► [Intranet Policy](#)

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Metro Sheriff's Deputies Bring Christmas Joy to East LA Family

BY JIMMY STROUP

(Dec. 16, 2005)

Christmas came a week early to Hugo Roldan and his two daughters, Idalia and Rebecca, when Sheriff's deputies from the Transit Services Bureau's El Monte Special Problems Unit delivered all sorts of goodies to help them celebrate the season right.

Deputies Leo Castro and Tom Rodriguez met Roldan while he was waiting for a bus late one night in early November. The deputies were patrolling the area around the Eastside Extension as part of a security push.

Wondering why he was out so late—and carrying so many groceries—

Castro and Rodriguez discovered that Roldan worked all day selling peanuts and seeds to support his young girls and only had the late night to shop for food after his girls had finished their schoolwork.

They also learned that Roldan and his daughters were living in a church basement because they were saving money to get an apartment of their own, and that Hugo had no real plans for Christmas because he couldn't afford it.

"They were the perfect family to receive this stuff," said Rodriguez. "They really needed it."

Photos: Jimmy Stroup



The Roldan family with San Gabriel Valley General Manager Jack Gabig and Sheriff's Deputies Leo Castro and Tom Rodriguez are surrounded by presents. Rodriguez and Castro were responsible for coordinating the gift donation with other Sheriff's deputies and Wal-Mart in the City of Industry.

A sparkling Christmas tree and lots of presents earn big smiles for Sheriff's Deputies from Idalia, 9, in red, and Rebecca, 7.



Microwave, bikes and toys

The stuff he's talking about was a microwave, bikes and toys for the girls, electric blankets, some food and a Christmas tree with lights and ornaments. The gifts, donated in part by Wal-Mart in the City of Industry and in part by the deputies themselves, were also to celebrate the Roldan family's move into their new apartment.

"We went to Wal-Mart and asked if they'd be willing to donate anything and they really came through for us," Castro said. "They even offered Hugo a job."

Castro and Rodriguez not only organized the gift donation, but also coordinated with the owners of the apartment the Roldans are renting to make certain they could move in on time, that the appliances would be there, and that the carpet would get replaced.

In full force, a dozen deputies and sergeants greeted Roldan and his daughters early Friday morning. The officers came to wish them well and give them what they could to help their holiday season shine a little brighter.



Metro San Gabriel Valley GM Jack Gabig and Sheriff's deputies from the Transit Services Bureau's El Monte Special Problems Unit smile for the camera with the Roldan family. Roldan and his daughters had only moved into their new apartment Thursday evening.

‘Something that God brought’

“I’m at a loss for words,” Roldan said in Spanish. “I’m kind of embarrassed. This is wonderful—something that God brought our way that I’m very grateful for.”

Idalia, 9, and Rebecca, 7, were overjoyed to receive the gifts, too. Though it may be hard, Idalia said she plans to keep one of her presents unopened until June for her birthday.



Rebecca, 7, and Idalia Roldan, 9, in red, open up the unexpected gifts from the Transit Services Bureau's El Monte Special Problems Unit. The presents, which were delivered to them Friday morning, included matching bikes, roller skates and board games.

San Gabriel Valley General Manager Jack Gabig was also present to wish the Roldans a happy holiday season from Metro.

“I think it’s a gift to us to be able to help them,” he said. “They’re giving more to us than we are to them.”

The celebrations were sweet and all too brief as the Roldan girls needed to get off to the last day of school before their winter break—a break that the deputies hope can now be a little happier in small ways.