



NEWS

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MTA BUS OPERATOR SPEARHEADS FOOD AND CLOTHING DRIVE TO AID CHILDREN LIVING IN BAJA CALIFORNIA ORPHANAGE

To the children living at the El Sauzal orphanage outside Ensenada, Mexico, MTA bus operator Nick Sifuentes and a group of friends and co-workers are nothing short of lifesavers.

For the last eleven years, Sifuentes has organized the delivery of much-needed food and clothing to the orphanage. At least twice a year Sifuentes gathers volunteers at Calvary Chapel in El Sereno before dawn to begin their drive to the small town of San Antonia De Minas. Besides other church members, the volunteers include fellow bus operators and mechanics from MTA's Division 3 where Sifuentes reports to work.

"A typical delivery consists of as many as 1,500 pounds of food," says Sifuentes, "and sometimes the orphanage calls with a special request and we'll make an emergency trip. There have been a couple of occasions where the cupboards were nearly bare when we arrived." Sifuentes adds that he and the other volunteers usually put on a barbecue on delivery day, treating the children to foods they don't often have the opportunity to enjoy.

Christmas would be a lonely time for youngsters growing up at El Sauzal were it not for Sifuentes and friends. Using a list provided by the orphanage director, they buy presents for the children and deliver them during the holidays.

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Sifuentes says there really is joy in giving. "Once a volunteer has made the trip to El Sauzal, it's rare to find one who's not eager to go back," he says. "When you see the look of excitement on the children's faces and realize how much they appreciate that someone really cares about them, you can't help but get hooked." Besides the operators and mechanics who make the trip to El Sauzal, many of the others in Division 3 also make donations to the effort.

In addition to organizing the deliveries to El Sauzal, Sifuentes is a member of the Division Advisory Team for Division 3. Along with fellow team members, Sifuentes makes frequent presentations at local schools, encouraging youngsters to be good citizens.

Sifuentes says his job as an operator is rewarding, and he hopes his volunteer work is making a difference in the lives of young children on both sides of the border.

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Note to editors: Sifuentes and the other volunteers will hold a raffle at MTA's Division 3 on Friday November 8 at 1 p.m. to help pay for the food and clothing they'll deliver to the children of El Sauzal orphanage.

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They'll gather again on Saturday, November 9 at **3:45 a.m.** at Calvary Chapel El Sereno, 5375 Poplar Blvd., Los Angeles, before making the trip to El Sauzal. Reporters and camera crews are welcome to join the caravan. The volunteers' estimated time of return to Los Angeles is 8 p.m.