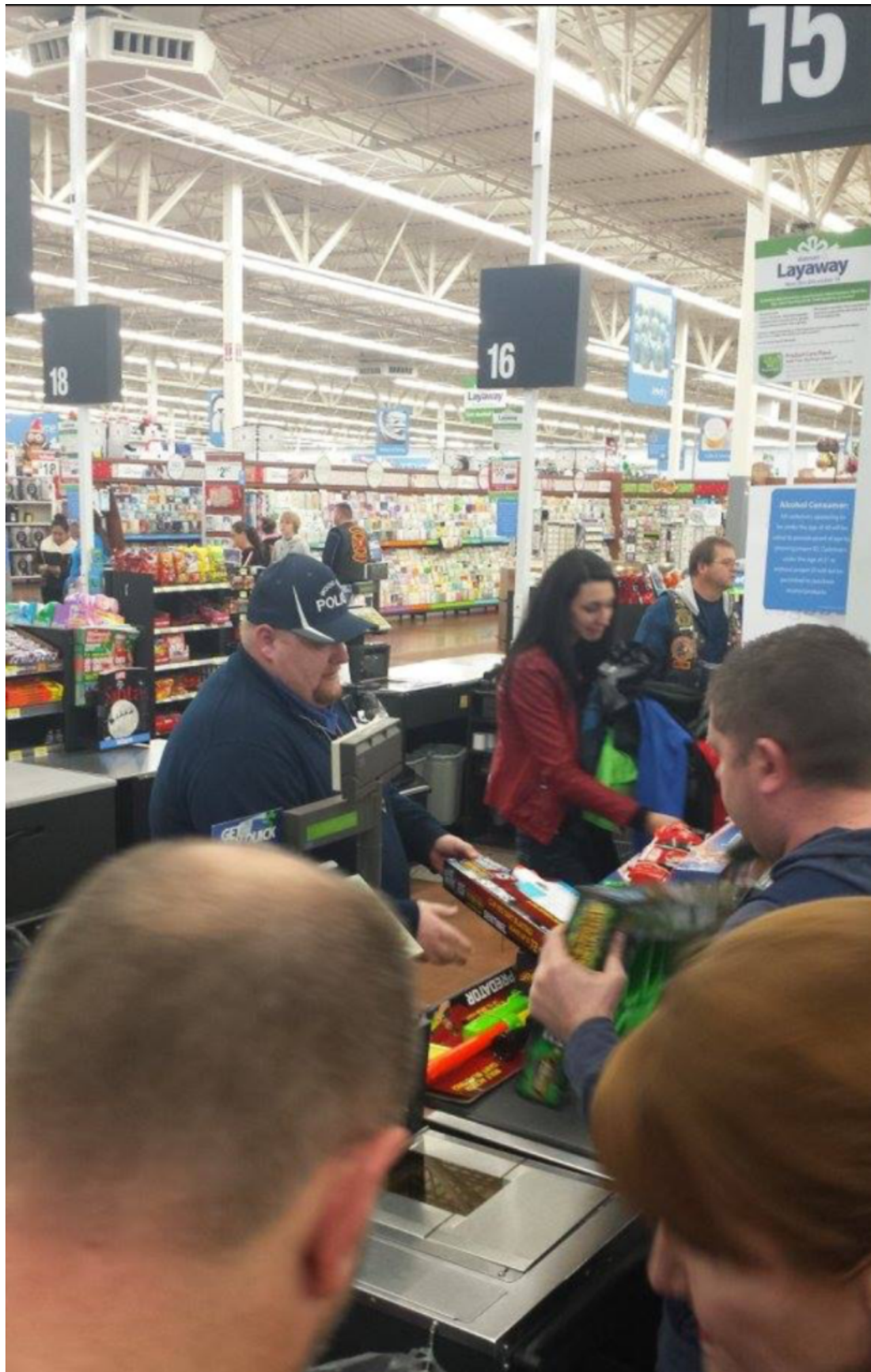




Patches & Badges for Kids shopping program lifts lives of children again at Christmas

by Dan Brannan, Content Director
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WOOD RIVER - The local **Patches & Badges for Kids** Christmas shopping program lights up the faces of not only the children, but the officers and first responders who participate.

The first responders and volunteers, including members of local motorcycle clubs, held a shopping spree for youth on both Tuesday and Wednesday night at the Wal-Mart in Wood River.

Joey L. Petrokovich, a Wood River Police officer, said the organization became a non-profit about five years ago under the name Patches & Badges for Kids and said it has made a big difference for children in need.

“East Alton, Wood River, Roxana, Hartford, Bethalto and Madison County Sheriff’s Department all participate each year,” he said about the organization. “We do several different fund raisers throughout the year and give what we raise back to the community.

"If there is a fire involving children, we try to help and we do the Christmas shopping each year. We also help Toys for Tots each year.”

School districts in East Alton, Wood River, Hartford, Roxana and Bethalto submit names of children the organization should help and that is how they come up with their Christmas shopping list.

Petrokovich said the experience is humbling for the officers, first responders and motorcycle groups and something they look forward to doing each year.

He said the officers and other participants describe the kids involved as "polite, respectful and most appreciative."



