

# **"Christmas with a Cop" puts smiles on faces of children, officers alike**

by Dan Brannan, Content Director  
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**EDWARDSVILLE** – The **Edwardsville Fraternal Order of Police, Lodge 244**, once again held its sixth annual “Christmas with a Cop” program and it left the children, their families and the officers all in the spirit of the holiday.

The “**Christmas with a Cop**” program was held Saturday at the Target in Edwardsville after a donated breakfast at the Burger King in the city. The Edwardsville Police officers walked with each selected child for the shopping spree and helped them find the gifts to put under the Christmas tree.

Rick Thompson, an Edwardsville officer, helped start the event six years ago and continues to lead the program. The spouses of several of the involved officers, along with the Edwardsville Explorer’s Post, assisted in wrapping presents for the children.

Thompson said six years ago the Edwardsville Fraternal Order of Police Lodge 244 members decided this was something they needed to get done at Christmas time.

"This for me personally is the reason I became a cop," he said. "Any time we get to chance a kid's life, we want to do that because they touch our lives and our hearts. I look forward to this most every year of everything we do. I know that most police officers look at all kids as our children. When I throw this uniform on, I feel I am a father to all the kids in the community."

Ashley Thompson and several other police officer spouses participated in the Christmas event, wrapping presents. She beams with pride of what her husband and the other officers participating in the shopping spree.

"I think this is such an awesome thing they do for the community," she said. "It gets the community to see the officers in such a nice light."

Edwardsville Police Chief Jay Keeven said he couldn't be more proud of the Edwardsville Fraternal Order of Police, Lodge 244, for putting on the event and raising the money to purchase the gifts.

"It is an awesome event," Keeven said. "It wouldn't be possible without great businesses like Target and Burger King supporting us and the positive interaction we have in this community. Our police department truly enjoys policing this community. They truly have a mutual respect for the citizens we serve and it shows in events like this."

Edwardsville Police Sgt. Matt Breihan assisted Thompson and the other officers in organizing the effort. Breihan is president of the Fraternal Order of Police Lodge 244. He said it only puts a smile on all the officers' faces when they hand the children \$200 to go shopping, then assist them with finding the right gift.



“Right now are teaching responsible spending,” Breihan said as he stopped for a minute during the shopping spree to talk. “We start with needs, then shop for wants. We enjoy every minute of it. We get to meet a whole lot of new kids each year. This eventually is our future and we like to take care of that. Each year, this gets bigger and bigger each year.”

Stephanie, one of the young girls who was part of the shopping spree, was ecstatic at what the officers had done to help her have a Merry Christmas.

“I am glad we get to do this,” she said. “This is amazing. It is a really nice experience and great we get to do it. It is nice the Edwardsville Police officers can spend their time helping us.”

Officer Jared Sprinkle said this is always one of his favorite things to do each year as a police officer and he said it truly puts you in the “spirit” of Christmas.

“It is a great event,” Sprinkle said. “It is heartwarming right around the holidays to go shopping with them. This brings back the meaning of Christmas for everybody.”



