

Edwardsville officer: “It’s not Christmas until we do Christmas with a Cop”

by Dan Brannan, Content Director
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EDWARDSVILLE - A total of 21 children had their **Christmas wishes** granted at **Edwardsville Target** on Saturday in the **Edwardsville Police Department's** annual **Christmas with a Cop**.

The **Edwardsville Fraternal Order of Police Lodge 244** union officers raised the funds for the Christmas shopping event. **Edwardsville Police Chief Jay Keeven** said most of officers were off-duty when they volunteered this past Saturday.

Keeven said he wanted to make it clear this was done by the department's front-line officers. "This was started as a grassroots effort with left over union dues and now officers have been fundraising. Every year they raise quite a bit of money," he said.

"The fact we can get half of our department to volunteer on a cold, sleety day and spend time with these children spending the money they have raised and they have personally donated to make sure the 21 children have a good Christmas, I could not be more proud of them."

Sgt. Matt Breihan of the **Edwardsville Police Department** said it was a "wonderful turnout" for the event.

"We have several families here and Mr. and Mrs. Claus are out visiting," Breihan said. "It makes the kids really excited."

"We did 21 kids today at \$200 each and after they shop, we wrap the presents. Families we are sponsoring will get a \$50 gift basket from the police officers," Breihan added. "We love to give back to the community that gives to us. This is something we look forward to and something we plan. We wish we could do more like the Shop with the Cop program, but we want to make sure each kid feels special enough and is assigned an officer. We just don't have enough officers to go around."

Burger King treated the children with breakfast prior to the Christmas shopping spree. The restaurant has been a part of Christmas with a Cop from the very beginning.

Edwardsville Police Officer Rick Thompson, the lead person for the Edwardsville Fraternal Order of Police for the event, said the day went great and ran smoothly.

"We had a small fire we put out; a family with six kids came out and had oil under the car everywhere and their car wouldn't start. One of our officers grabbed the D.A.R.E. van and picked up the whole family and got there in time.

"I lost the count, but 23 officers on their day off were here. Police covet their Saturday's off, but this shows how deserving these families are. Edwardsville is extremely unique

in the way they treat us. It is especially important to give back today to this community because they give us so much throughout the year.

“We have money taken out of our checks for it every month and we have a golf tournament in the spring and private donators that have been with us since the beginning. Every business we went to in town were falling all over themselves to give something to it. We want to say thank you to the community for support and an opportunity to give back today.”

Thompson closed with some special words about the feeling in the **Edwardsville Police Department in December**: “This something we think about whole month of December,” he said. “It’s not really Christmas until we get **Christmas with a Cop** going. It is pretty awesome.”





