

"In my late teens, my family was temporarily without a safe place to live. Programs such as Christmas in August mean so much to these children and families! Thanks for all that you do, Kiwanis Club! I am honored to participate!

Willie Simmons, Adult Leader
Healthy Teens Coalition of Manatee County, Inc.
2016 Young Adult of the Year, Healthy Teens Coalition



News & Updates

In this Update: Meaning of *Christmas in August*, Healthy Teens Coalition Support, A Caring Community, Gift of Reading, Thank You METV, Continue Making A Difference.

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The Meaning of Christmas in August

Rocio, a single mother of three, along with several hundred homeless students and their families participated in Bradenton Kiwanis's recent *Christmas in August* program. Behind the numbers are stories of local families who have an incredible struggle making ends meet.

Rocio (pronounced "row see o") is the mother of three sons, Manual, age 15, Angel, age 9, and Maxilione, age 7. She came to the United States three years ago to escape domestic violence in Mexico. Rocio and her sons have greatly benefited from *Christmas in August* in the past two years. Last year, Angel was diagnosed with a visual deficit by a LECOM medical volunteer. Eyeglasses were then prescribed. Angel went from a struggling student to one who is reading above grade level. Rocio's gratitude to Kiwanis and LECOM is quite touching and again reinforces the need for community partner support.



Project Heart Home School Liaison, Brenda Rossi has been instrumental, guiding Rocio and her sons to programs and community services, *Christmas in August* being one that has helped with their financial struggles. And thanks to supportive programs provided by the Boys and Girls Club at Daughtry Elementary School, Rocio is able to work almost full-time at Paper Pad.

Rocio went on to thank *Christmas in August* for her sons' school supplies and

Bealls and Payless gift cards which have already been used to purchase shoes and clothing for all three boys. This year, Rocio was also grateful for a turkey given by the Salvation Army, boxes of food from the Food Bank of Manatee and fresh produce distributed by the School District's Food Bus, all partner organizations who support *Christmas in August*.

When asked what her boys favorite part of *Christmas in August* was, Rocio didn't hesitate in saying that it was the police vehicles and SWAT vans. When asked what *Christmas in August* means to her, she began to cry and said, "It is a blessing and a great opportunity for me and my sons to have basic needs met. The school supplies mean my boys will have a chance for success in school. I am so very grateful."

Rocio speaks Spanish and understands English, but on this day had Brenda Rossi helping with translation when needed. However, Rocio's tears of thanks needed no interpretation.

Photo courtesy of Bradenton Kiwanis Foundation. L-R Rocio, Maxilione, Angel and Brenda Rossi.

Healthy Teens Coalition A Great Partner

Members of Healthy Teens Coalition of Manatee County continue to partner with Bradenton Kiwanis's *Christmas in August*.

Healthy Teens Coalition was formed in 2010 as a response to community concerns about serious issues impacting Manatee County young people. Issues included teen pregnancy, rising sexual transmitted disease (STD) rates, drug and alcohol use and other high risk behaviors.



"This is my third year of working the Healthy Teens Coalition booth at Christmas in August. It is not only personally rewarding but also so much fun! Thanks so much for asking us to participate! The Teen Health Educators cannot wait for next year's event!"

Flor Zamora
Teen Health Educator
2016 Manatee Chamber of Commerce
Youth Health Care Champion of the Year

Healthy Teens Coalition members provide awareness to *Christmas in August* participants about issues that impact them. Healthy Teens Coalition trains youth leaders who are interested and dedicated to educate peers and parents. Every member is exceptionally informative, kind, considerate, a great listener and committed to reducing risky teen behaviors while promoting physical, mental and emotional health and well-being.

Photo courtesy of Johnson Photolmaging. *The Healthy Teen Coalition Christmas in August team: L-R (seated) Flor Zamora, (standing) Perla Borja-Morales, September Waiters, Erianna Sanders, Willie Simmons and Stacy Cumming*

Christmas in August Reflects A Caring Community

Please take moment to read Toni Jefferies, excellent *Christmas in August* article.

[Christmas in August Article](#)

"Christmas in August is the culmination of the work of hundreds of volunteers, thousands of hours, donations and in-kind support from local businesses and individuals. It reflects a caring community dedicated to the present and future needs of all students, including homeless children who are among the most vulnerable." Toni Jefferies, State College of Florida



Photo Courtesy of Dr. Carol Probstfeld. A *Christmas in August* participant enjoys face painting thanks to Bradenton Christian School Key Club.

Gift of Reading

United Way Suncoast was one of over 100 community partner organizations supporting *Christmas in August* participants with age appropriate books. United Way and Kiwanis know the importance of providing books to children in order to stimulate their reading.



"United Way takes every opportunity to provide a child with a book. We are happy to participate in *Christmas in August*."

Carolyn Griffin
Director of Strategic Impact
United Way Suncoast

United Way Suncoast is seeking volunteers to read to elementary school students. For additional information contact Carolyn at 941-932-8256 or email her at cgriffin@uwsuncoast.org.

Photo Courtesy of Johnson Photolmaging. *Christmas in August* students select two age appropriate books from the United Way table.

Christmas in August Video

Many thanks to Manatee Education Television (METV) for continuing to provide great video coverage of *Christmas in August*. The METV 2018 video brings home the sights and sounds that will warm your heart with the wonderful philanthropic effort we call *Christmas in August*.



Photo Courtesy of Bradenton Kiwanis Foundation. L-R Willie Cooper, Boys and Girls Club Community Relations Director, Trudi Diamant and Barbara Owsianka volunteering from Manatee Clerk's Office and METV videographer Richard Brooks.

Continue Making A Difference

Bradenton Kiwanis is grateful to all of you who join us in our effort to change the world and our community one child at a time. The brief articles you have read in this newsletter provide a glimpse of how a caring community works together to make a difference. If our philanthropy makes sense to you, please consider making a gift that enables all of us to impact families, neighbors and friends who need help the most.



Donations may be made any time by mailing a check to Bradenton Kiwanis Foundation, P.O. Box 1032, Bradenton, FL 34206-1032.

Donations can also be made online by clicking this link [secure online gift link](#).

Please direct any questions to Roland Emerton at roland.emerton@yahoo.com or 941-779-8786.

Photo courtesy of Johnson Photomaging. *Christmas in August* participants.

Thank You for Making a Difference!

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