

10th Annual

BRIDGES Preschool Food & Toy Drive

Hyder is located in the middle of nowhere between Gila Bend and Yuma, AZ. It is a small impoverished farming community, consisting mostly of field-hands, and fish hatchery workers. (Did you know shrimp come from the desert???) The families that we deliver to are struggling, low income, most parents and older children working dawn to dusk. They are primarily single Moms, however last year we had two widowed Dads too.

Years ago, our Grandpa built a house way the heck out there, probably because the land was super cheap, and the desert has a peacefulness to it. It is still one of the only houses out there. Most dwellings are run down single wide trailers and the like. He and our Grandma have both passed and the house has been cared for by our Aunt and Uncle who have become somewhat like town missionaries.

Our Aunt has, for a long time, worked at the tiny general store, which is among the only commerce in the area. It is like a small, run down Circle K type store in an old freestanding building. Because of her job, she is very connected to the families and needs of the area. It is through her that we get our list of children every year. We do not go through an organization, we are the organization.

Year 1:

Back when we were one school, we had some parents that wanted to help create charitable involvement for our children. Within days of this idea, our Aunt visited with tears over the fact that there were families that she has fallen in love with that have never seen Christmas and rarely have ample food. Coincidentally, they became our charitable project.

When we first started, the children of Hyder, AZ couldn't wrap their heads around the notion that Santa was really coming. We have several tear jerking stories that continue to pile up each year. Every year when we show up with a truck load of food and gifts, our Aunt weeps and asks us if we would PLEASE deliver right away to a couple of particular homes. It's an extremely rewarding but emotionally draining experience.

Here we are, 10 years later and last year alone gave Christmas to 115 children and their families! Now, we have a small community that has been growing up understanding the meaning of Christmas because of the charity and love that has become an annual example from the AMAZING families and friends of BRiDGES. Every year, we get success stories of families in Hyder who have found their way out of poverty. It is very rewarding and we believe very strongly in what we do.

There is nothing in it for us other than the satisfaction of an important act of kindness well done. There are no tax write offs, no middle man. This is simply our way of giving back and an opportunity for us to teach empathy and charity to our BRiDGES children and brighten the lives of others. It takes a lot of time to organize and carry out year after year. Each year as our operations grew so did the charity and the amount of families that benefit from these kind acts. It has always been well worth it.

Our goal is to provide each child with a stocking, a gift, a book, and a piece of clothing. We collect a gift for the parent, and a hygiene kit for each child over 10. (This is the most favored of items received!). We also collect a "household kit" which is usually in the form of a bucket or laundry basket filled with misc. household needs such as cleaning items and paper products. Because the Christmas collection is such a large undertaking, we collect food in November. The food goes to the homes of those perceived by our Aunt as having the greatest need.

There are pictures and letters from some of the children and parents on display at each campus. I hope that you, along with your children and other families will enjoy participating.