

# Richardson church shows Christ's love to low-income families

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RICHARDSON—More than 1,100 children from about 300 low-income families received new toys and shoes at The Heights Baptist Church in Richardson.



Steven Scott, a member of The Heights Baptist Church in Richardson, helped provide a couple with gifts for their children. (Photo by David Alvey) "It's our great joy to partner with our community to celebrate the Christmas season by sharing Christ's love," said Richard Covington, community minister at The Heights Baptist Church.

The families participated in the church's 10th annual Three Trees celebration.



Richard Covington (center), community minister at The Heights Baptist Church in Richardson, joins Pam Plummer (left) and Ashlee Cobb in leading the Three Trees team. (Photo by David Alvey) "The event gets its name from a children's story that traces the significance of three trees in the life of Jesus, where one tree is fashioned into a manger, the second tree into a fishing boat and the third tree becomes the cross," Covington explained. "The story reminds us that while things may not seem to be going our way, God has a plan for each of us. If we place our trust in him, he will give us better gifts than we ever dreamed."

Most of the participating families have children who attend Bukhair Elementary School in Richardson, where many members of The Heights Baptist Church volunteer.

"Through events like their Fall Festival, Math & Science Night, Field Day, and weekly mentoring sessions, our members have developed meaningful relationships with these kids and their families," Covington said.

Hundreds of volunteers from the church entertained the children and helped them decorate about 1,700 sugar cookies, while their parents secretly shopped for their Christmas presents.

Church members donated thousands of toys, games and gift cards worth more than \$75,000. Each family selected a gift for each of their children.

They also received a gift card for new shoes for each child, and a grocery gift card to buy Christmas dinner.

The church asked guests to donate a food item for the Network Community Ministries of Richardson, and the congregation collected more than 700 pounds of food.

Pastor Gary Singleton had challenged the church by asking, "If The Heights were to disappear from the corner of Renner Road and Central Expressway, would our community know we were gone?" Covington noted.

"After seeing all the love our church poured into these families, I can unequivocally answer, 'Yes,'" he said.