

[https://www.hometownnewsbrevard.com/news/union-members-buy-presents-for-400-children/article\\_6731358a-1b87-11ea-b5f5-2fae742f728e.html](https://www.hometownnewsbrevard.com/news/union-members-buy-presents-for-400-children/article_6731358a-1b87-11ea-b5f5-2fae742f728e.html)

CENTERPIECE

FEATURED

## Union members buy presents for 400 children

By Brittany Mulligan [bmulligan@hometownnewsmediagroup.com](mailto:bmulligan@hometownnewsmediagroup.com)

Dec 12, 2019



Aidan Poston helps find gifts for children during the shopping spree hosted by the International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers Local Lodge 2061 from Kennedy Space Center.

Staff photo by Brittany Mulligan

BREVARD COUNTY — The community has pulled its funds together to give 400 children in the foster care system a Christmas to look forward to this year.

The International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers Local Lodge 2061 from Kennedy Space Center have been raising money year-round in order to shop for presents. This year, they were able to raise \$15,000.

"We live and work here, and we want to help out local kids that are not as privileged," said Ed Grabowski, president of the Local Lodge 2061. "This is our thing that we've been doing for several years, and it's grown each year."

On Dec. 5, members from the Machinists Union brought their families to shop until they dropped at the Titusville Target. Dozens of bicycles were chosen and carts were filled with toys from Paw Patrol to Frozen II merchandise, Legos and items for children with special needs.

The toys were donated to Brevard Family Partnership, which aims to protect children, strengthen families and change lives.

"It's quite humbling because it's nice when the community stands by us, particularly at this time of year," said Phil Scarpelli, CEO of Brevard Family Partnership. "It's very difficult for children, given a lot of separation and loss from their biological families, to have community members like this to understand what holiday means to children. This altruistic gesture really brings a lot of joy and happiness to them.

"For us, we're committed to work the system around them; it makes us happy to know that they're happier," Mr. Scarpelli added. "These are just regular folks and it's not their business to understand the system. It just reignites me all the time when I see the community step up."

Steve Ching, vice president of Lodge 2061, said he first got involved because Brevard Family Partnership had approached the union asking to help children celebrate Christmas.

"I always grew up with a beautiful tree, plenty of presents - I never wanted anything, I always had clothes and bicycles," Mr. Ching said. "I couldn't imagine some child here in America where he wouldn't get a Christmas present, that didn't have that joy. That's what hooked me. It amazes me every year how much we grow."

---

Brittany Mulligan

Associate Managing Editor