



# LA MESA-SPRING VALLEY SCHOOLS

## News Release

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### **La Mesa-Spring Valley Schools Embrace Families in Need with *Toys for Tots* and *Gently Hugged***

'Tis the season for some very special individuals working in the La Mesa-Spring Valley Schools to spread some extra special holiday cheer to some of its most needy families. Thanks to the tireless efforts of Aubrey Gallegos-Asimos, an amazing district Educationally-Related Mental Health (ERMHS) Provider, over 700 students (almost doubling the number from last year), at 13 different school sites, will be receiving a toy from the *Toys for Tots* program this holiday season. Aubrey shared, "I would love to highlight the staff at the school sites as they are charged with reaching out to families, and distributing each individual toy." Donations came from Toys for Tots and staff have donated their time to organize and distribute toys to schools and families. Aubrey wanted to be sure to single out David Martinosky, Lead Storekeeper at the Operations Center, and the entire transportation services department, for providing the sleigh and Spring Valley Academy for providing "Santa's Workshop" as a distribution hub. Well after work hours, David and delivery driver, Paul Novak, had their holiday spirit on full display, when they volunteered to drive to MCAS Miramar to pick up additional toy donations from the base.



At Rolando Elementary, third grade teacher extraordinaire, Caren Sebok, started a collection, with locations in the office and outside her classroom for *Gently Hugged*.



*Gently Hugged* was founded by two nurses working in the field of Public Health who witnessed first-hand how more and more families are struggling to acquire the basic necessities of life in today's economy. A new baby can put an added strain on already limited family resources and many babies lack appropriate items of clothing and blankets to stay warm and thrive during their crucial first year of life. At the same time, babies in many other communities are fortunate to have an excess of clothing during the course of their first year and many items are only worn once or twice or never used before they are outgrown. *Gently Hugged's* goal is to provide a way to get these surplus items into the arms of mothers with babies in need. Donated gently used or new clothing in Preemie to 12-month sizes along with blankets and accessories (hats, socks, and bibs) are being collected through the holiday season and beyond. Caren shared, "I saw a news story on TV about *Gently Hugged*, and the babies and families it helps, and it just really touched my heart."

