**Rotary Club of Castro Valley Hosts Annual Children's Christmas Party for Kids from Local Shelters**

On December 10, the CVUSD Adult School Multipurpose Room was transformed as the Rotary Club of a Castro Valley hosted their annual Children’s Christmas Party for children from local battered women’s and homeless shelters in our area. The program coordinator was (again for about two decades) Mark Poniatowski with tremendous help from other CV Rotarians plus Sutter employees and others.  Gifts, contributed by the Castro Valley California Highway Patrol from their generous donors, were available for all 127 children whose names were submitted.   More than 80 children attended with their parents and ate a turkey holiday dinner with all the extras prepared by CV Rotarians led by Cliff Sherwood, Randy Vanderbilt, Dan Willits and Carol Wikle and employees from Castro Valley Sanitary District, led by General Manager Roland Williams!  Games and activities were presented by the InterAct kids from Redwood Christian High School (led by vice principal Erin McGrath) and the women’s shelter guests arrived by a Redwood Christian Schools school bus! Our youngest guest was four weeks old this year.

The CHP was represented with Officer Gabriel Walters (who coordinates the gifts with us each year!) and brought his motorcycle in for pictures for the kids, and Sergeant Brandie Dressel. And then Santa Claus and Santa’s Helper (aka Dr. Heidi Hausauer) arrived by Alameda County Fire truck!  Every child present had their name called by Santa’s Helper and received their gift from Santa (this is his personal favorite Christmas appearance!). CV Rotarian shoppers at CHP Carol Bigelow and CV Rotarian Michaela Thompson assisted the RCHS Students who wrapped the packages, and CV Rotarian Ceta Dochterman handled the packages for delivery to Santa’s Helper.  Former Volunteer Coordinator for Hayward Area Recreation District's Adopt-a-Family Zach Ebadi came with his digital camera and printer and, at parents request, took pictures of the guests, printed the picture and presented it to the family, and then deleted the picture from his camera . . . therefore, the kids (and their parents) have a Santa picture without fear of it being posted anywhere! Thanks, Zach!   This event is truly a community event as CV Rotary, Redwood Christian Schools, Sutter Health, the Castro Valley CHP and others came together to provide a special Christmas event for all present!  Special thanks to CVUSD Superintendent Parvin Ahmadi and her staff for hosting the event every year and to Redwood Christian Schools Superintendent Dr. Al Hearne for transporting many of our guests by bus.  Program Chair Mark Poniatowski looks forward to this event each year: “‘Service Above Self’ is alive and well at the Rotary Club of Castro Valley and throughout our community.”