



# NEWS



## News Headlines 12/28/2017

- Mara's Christmas Wish keeps tradition alive
- Palmdale Road closed due to crash involving sheriff's deputy

## Mara's Christmas Wish keeps tradition alive

Jenna Hunt, The Desert Trail

Posted: December 27, 2017 4:55 p.m.



Pauline Dees dresses as an elf and sings beautifully inside while people enjoy their meals. Dee said Mara's favorite song was "Please come home for Christmas," and she always requested it. "She loved that song," said Dee, who has been volunteering for the past 4 years. "She was amazing."

**YUCCA VALLEY** — On Christmas Day, a massive volunteer effort continued the labor of love started by the late Mara Cantelo three decades ago when she vowed no one would have to be hungry or alone on Christmas.

The event was called Mara's Christmas Wish, in honor of Tender Loving Christmas founder Cantelo, who died Sept. 11. Mara's Christmas Wish provided a free Christmas buffet at the Yucca Valley Community Center for anyone in the Morongo Basin who wanted to participate.

Andrea Garcia, a volunteer for the event since 1999, said it has been an honor to continue her friend's legacy. "It's been hard for me this year. Mara was like a second mother to me. She taught me so much," Garcia said. "I miss her."

Garcia and her friend Vicki Wind, who has been volunteering since 2000, both said they were extremely happy with how well the event turned out.

"She has a lot of memories in this park and helping the children," Wind said, indicating the community center park. "We're happy to volunteer."

A framed photograph of Cantelo greeted guests as they entered the dining area, where the traditional free buffet awaited diners. Before the feast began, volunteer leader Paul Hoffman held a moment of silence for Cantelo, his friend for several decades.

Outside the community center, Stacey Anderson, also known as "Boo the Elf," painted cheerful Christmas designs on the faces of the children as they waited in line for visits with Santa. Music from the One 80 Ministries band uplifted the crowds.

Kayla Coz, 9, and her sister Aqilah Coz, 7, both had their faces painted as mom Donzaleigh Cox and their two brothers watched from the line.

"It's a good day," their mom said, smiling.

Santa Claus' longtime helper, William Swinnerton, made sure all children got to spend time with the man in red.

After visiting with Santa, children were given bags of toys collected by the **San Bernardino County Fire Department** and Morongo Basin Ambulance Association.

Hayley Hughes and Renee and Dave Faller helped with the toy giveaway, watching as children of all ages squealed in delight as they opened the gifts.

“We do this every year,” said Dave Faller, a captain with the Fire Department. Renee Faller said 450 children received bags of toys, valued at about \$6,000. There was also a clothing giveaway at the event.

The community center’s largest space, the Yucca Room, was filled with Christmas spirit and song, as Sherrie Karr, wearing colorful lights around her neck, and Pauline Dees, dressed as an elf, serenaded diners.

Dees said Cantelo’s favorite song was the R&B classic “Please Come Home for Christmas,” and she always requested it.

“She loved that song,” said Dees, who has been volunteering for the past four years. “She was amazing.”

The afternoon feast served up more than 600 pounds of ham and turkey, 700 pounds of potatoes and yams and endless bowls of salad. The meal was made possible with the talents of the kitchen professionals at The Roost and Bruce’s Place and the administrative skills of the Way Station.

The event brought out an estimated 1,200 people from all backgrounds, helped by 203 volunteers. “I thought it was absolutely wonderful,” Hoffman said Wednesday afternoon.

That morning, he had taken a call from a little boy who lives in Twentynine Palms.

“He and his family hadn’t eaten in two or three days. They ate and then were allowed to take food home with them,” Hoffman said.

He praised the many volunteers who made sure everyone at the event was smiling. And even though the preparation involved five days of relentless work, he was happy after it was finished.

“It was a magnificent day. It took five days of pain and suffering, but it was absolutely worth every minute of it,” Hoffman said. “I don’t know how Mara did it all those years. I was in her footsteps and I’m sure she was looking down on me, pushing me along.”

Hoffman doesn’t think anyone left feeling unhappy or hungry.

“We had a beautiful day and everybody was grateful that it was still going on. It was a wonderful day for everybody,” he said.

[http://www.hidesertstar.com/news/article\\_d0930bca-eb69-11e7-8bd9-5720d5c50ca8.html](http://www.hidesertstar.com/news/article_d0930bca-eb69-11e7-8bd9-5720d5c50ca8.html)

## **Palmdale Road closed due to crash involving sheriff's deputy**

**VVNG Staff, Victor Valley News Group**

Posted: December 23, 2017

**VICTORVILLE, Calif. (VVNG.com)** – A stretch of Palmdale Road remains closed following a crash involving a San Bernardino County Sheriff's patrol unit that injured the deputy and two others.

It happened just after 6:00 pm, on Saturday, December 23, 2017, just east of US Highway 395 near the entrance/exit of The Crossroads shopping center in Victorville.

For reasons still under investigation, a Victor Valley Sheriff's Station patrol vehicle was involved in a crash with a white four-door sedan near the entrance/exit of The Crossroads shopping center in Victorville.

**San Bernardino County Fire** responded and treated two patients from the vehicle as well as the sheriff's deputy. All were transported to various hospitals, however everyone's injuries were described as minor and not life threatening.

Motorist are encouraged to find alternate routes around the area as officials have placed a hard road closure. Palmdale Road between Cantina and Highway 395 is expected to remain closed for several hours, due to the ongoing investigation.

Information will be updated as it becomes available.

<http://www.vvng.com/palmdale-road-closed-due-crash-involving-sheriffs-deputy/>