

Redlands store helps families during shopping season

Several families got an unexpected shopping trip at the Redlands JC Penney on Sunday.

In a national program called After School Roundup, JC Penney has been raising funds to support YMCA after-school programs.

The Redlands JC Penney spent weeks selling coupons to raise money for the program and presented a check Sunday for \$10,205, as well as 18 gift cards for \$50 each to children in the East Valley YMCA's CAPS program.

Jan Whittaker, general manager of the JC Penney in Redlands, said that more than 600 discount coupons had been sold during the two weeks leading up to the event.

CAPS, or Creative Before- and After-School Program for Success, is a partnership between the San Bernardino City Unified School District and the San Bernardino Family YMCA.

Children in the CAPS program were asked to write an essay about why they should get a gift card, and winners were then chosen, said Kathy Chennault, director of development at YMCA of the East Valley.

"It was tough to choose," Chennault said.

"We serve about 12,000 kids a day in the CAPS program."

JC Penney labeled the Sunday event the Day of Giving, and store employees worked to make it fun.

"They had a big wheel set up and everyone that bought a \$5 coupon book got to spin the wheel and win something," Chennault said. Prizes included store discounts, Starbucks certificates and free sodas. Everyone won something.

Customers who visited Sunday were entered into a drawing to win a \$200 shopping spree.

"The assistant store manager put together little gift bags for the kids with pencils and candy, too," she said. "Everyone enjoyed the day."

YMCA staff geared up for the event with brightly colored T-shirts for themselves and the participating families.

The children had a great time shopping for school supplies, and the families were grateful for the help, Chennault said. Some of these children come from really tough backgrounds, with families that are struggling.

"They made the most of that money, shopping for bargains," she added. "It was really a beautiful thing."