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### **Strangers give the gift of hope**

*Arapahoe County's Adopt a Family program put presents under the tree*

**AURORA, CO** --- During tough economic times, the holidays can be rough especially for families who are struggling to make ends meet and put food on the table, but thanks to the generosity of the Arapahoe County community, 200 families including seniors will receive a break from the reality of their difficult lives this holiday season.

The Arapahoe County Board of County Commissioners took the lead in participating in the County's Adopt a Family program, which matches donators with local families in need during the holidays.

"County employees, local citizens, community organizations and businesses, pledged to provide food and gifts to almost 700 adults and children this year," said Arapahoe County Commissioner Rod Bockenfeld. "Times are tough for so many of us and to still see residents help place gifts under a tree where there'd be none is incredibly heartwarming."

It's not surprising that donators find the program just as rewarding.

"When my coworkers saw that four children had put non-perishable food on their wish list, it brought tears to our eyes," said Liz Ellis, an Arapahoe County employee. "We knew immediately that we had to adopt this family and make their holidays special."

Staff were filled with joy as they watched families' reactions during gift delivery. So many were filled with emotion; through tears, they expressed their overwhelming gratitude. In addition to receiving gifts, families attended a VIP event at The Wildlife Experience. Sponsored by Convention Designs, a full service event planning company specializing in convention planning and corporate events, the celebration gave families to enjoy an evening filled with fun, food, photos and more.

"We are so thankful to Convention Designs for donating their time and money to create an event that allows these families to escape from their current situations for an evening and to feel the joy and warmth the holiday season brings," added Bockenfeld.

Arapahoe County would like to thank all of the donators for their generous spirit and loving hearts. Any individuals, groups or organizations interested in participating in the 2009 Adopt a

Family program can call 303-636-1150 and leave their information to be contacted in November.

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To download photos click on the following link: <ftp://www.co.arapahoe.co.us/Pub/CM/Photos/>

*Photo captions:*

JCPenney: Teresa Cota delivers bags and bags of gifts on behalf of the staff of JCPenney at Southlands Mall. "It's a warm feeling to know we've made the holidays special. Next year we want to double our participation and adopt four large families."

Stacia\_Gift: Arapahoe County Adopt a Family Coordinator Stacia Schmied Johnston pulls down an infant excersaucer to deliver to a family in need.

Staff\_Deliver: Mountains of gifts are ready for delivery thanks to the community's generosity in the 2008 Arapahoe County Adopt a Family program.

Frosty\_Salen\_Shamika: Salen and Shamika enjoy a hug from Frosty at the Arapahoe County Adopt a Family VIP Event.