

Published December 7th, 2011

## Helping Children Feel Safe When They Need it Most

By Sophie Braccini



Officer Will Davis (left) and Sergeant Brian South  
Photo Sophie Braccini

What do tough police officers and soft stuffed animals have in common? In Moraga they 'collaborate' to make children feel safe when they need it the most. To allow as many children as possible to feel better when they are confronted with traumatic situations, the Moraga Police Officers Association is holding its fourth annual drive to collect new and gently used stuffed animals.

"I have been in situations when a kid was in an accident, or we had to announce a death, and I had a stuffed animal in the trunk of my car to comfort that child," says Sergeant Brian South, who is the President of the Moraga Police Officers Association and the manager of the holiday stuffed animal collection drive. "Four years ago we were looking for a way to give back to the community and found S.A.F.E., Stuffed Animals For Emergencies, Inc.," remembers South, "we saw a great synergy between their mission and ours and started the collection." According to S.A.F.E, stuffed animals help ease the fears of children in times of crisis.

Every year the number of stuffies collected increases. Last year it was 1500 and South expects the number to rise again this year. "We have to remove them from the bins

every day and put them in the store room," he says, "people in Moraga are very generous."

Some of the animals will stay at the Moraga Police Department for the officers to use when necessary. The rest will be sent to S.A.F.E. chapters that will dispatch them where they are most needed. "The first year some of them went overseas for our soldiers to give to the children in the war zones," says South, "most of the time, the animals go to local police and fire departments that will give them to children affected by traumatic events, or to hospitals, shelters and other charitable organizations."

Stuffed animals may be brought to the hallway of the Town's Offices at 329 Rheem Boulevard until December 27.

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[back](#)

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