

Money is down but spirits are up

Written by Alex Davis

Thursday, December 13, 2012 03:00 am



Hamer's School of Karate helps the less fortunate

WHITESBORO – Janice Collins of Rio Grande came to the Martin Luther King Community Center on Saturday to see her daughter and three grandchildren smile as they opened up bags of gifts.

Times are tough, she said, and she's not sure what she'll do for Christmas gifts this year.

This was the 16th year the Hamer's School of Karate hosted an event to help less fortunate children in Cape May County.

About 80 kids received bags of presents Dec. 8.

But young people did not get as many gifts as in the past, said Burgess "Butch" Hamer, who runs the karate school.

The money was not there, he said. Usually, \$6,000 is spent on toys and coats but half that amount was brought in for this year's event, organizers said.

Typically, kids get a coat and several toys. This year, they received a coat and one toy, Hamer said.

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That didn't seem to bother the children. Some children opened the bags when they received them at the recreation center in Whitesboro. Others kids are waiting.

"The kids are excited. And it's really all about the kids," Collins said.

Collins said she first turned out for the gift-giving event about four years ago.

"I only come if I need something," she said.

This year, the poor economy brought her to the Christmas party.



"And every little bit helps," she said.

Collins knows she cannot afford what the four children want, including an Xbox gaming system.

The gifts from the Hamer's School of Karate Christmas party are a major help, Collins indicated.

"If they're happy, I'm happy," she said about the children.

Butch Hamer said the event is "one of the most important things in my life."

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“We live to give back in this community,” he said.

Some children won't receive gifts for Christmas, and the event fills that void, Hamer said.

“We feel happy, too,” said Roberto Lopez of Wildwood.

He and his wife brought their two children to the event.

“I feel so glad. And I thank God for everybody – for all the people who do this,” Lopez said.

The event started in 1996 with 50 children, increased to 150, then went down to about 80, Hamer said. He said he is hoping for more money next year to buy more gifts.

To give to the cause, call event Christmas party chairwoman Sandra Jensen at 465-9644 or send monetary donations to 104 Goshen Road, Cape May Court House, 08210.