

Luminaries

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Martin Co., St. Lucie Co., Indian River Co.



Breakfast with Santa

St. Lucie Mets, New Horizons hit ho-ho-home run with children, families

ST. LUCIE COUNTY

COVER STORY

'Breakfast with Santa' fills tummies, spreads joy

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USA TODAY NETWORK - FLORIDA

Hundreds of children filled First Data Field on a sunny December morning for the second annual New Horizons 'Breakfast with Santa' event, presented by the St. Lucie Mets.

Holiday festivities included an all-you-can-eat breakfast, cookie decorating, card making, bounce houses, face painting, goodie bags, and pictures with Santa to take home.

On the cover

Colin, Sean, Tyler and Meaghan Ashurst enjoy breakfast at the New Horizons 'Breakfast with Santa' event, presented Dec. 2 by the St. Lucie Mets at First Data Field. PHOTO BY LISA RYMER/ FOR LUMINARIES

Children came from Hibiscus Children's Center in Jensen Beach, Hibiscus Village in Vero Beach, and the Boys and Girls Clubs of St. Lucie

County. They came with grandmothers, housemothers, mommies and daddies. Their eyes shone bright with anticipation, their smiles spread a message of hope - it truly was a magical morning in a baseball wonderland.

New Horizons of the Treasure Coast and Okeechobee, a nonprofit mental health and substance abuse agency serving 11,000 children and adults annually, partnered with the St. Lucie Mets, Dyer Auto Group, Walmart Distribution Center, Little Birthday Angels, and the Treasure Coast Photography Center to create wholesome memories for children to cherish throughout their lifetime.



The St. Lucie Mets teamed up to sponsor and volunteer at New Horizons' "Breakfast with Santa" on Dec. 2 at First Data Field. Spending a moment with Santa, are, front row, from left, Paul Taglieri, executive director of Minor League Facilities; Kasey Blair, director of Group Sales and Community Relations; Santa (Kevin Lake); and Traer Van Allen, general manager of St. Lucie Mets. Back row: John Gallagher, manager of Food and Beverage; Clint Cure, assistant general manager; Kyle Gleockler, director of ticketing and merchandise; and Adam MacDonald, director of broadcast and media relations. PHOTOS BY LISA RYMER/ FOR LUMINARIES

"We wanted to create an experience for children that lifted their spirits and formed positive memories of Christmas joy," said John Romano, New Horizons CEO.

The St. Lucie Mets opened the stadium gates to area children for a day of sheer delight. After the morning activities, there was an outdoor screening of "How the Grinch Stole Christmas" on the big scoreboard.

"The Mets are a family-oriented organization," said Kasey Blair, director of Community Relations and Group Sales.

"We are always finding ways to give back to this community."

Dyer Auto Group, which named New Horizons as the recipient of last month's Dyer Difference Award in St. Lucie County, helping to raise funds and awareness for mental health services, handed out candy canes to the crowds of children and teens.

Loretta Kaul and Angel Pietsch of Little Birthday Angels, a nonprofit organization that brings birthday parties into homeless shelters, donated all the balloon decorations for the event.



Volunteers Loretta Kaul and Angel Pietsch, with Little Birthday Angels, and Leah Duskin of Fort Pierce Central High School, with an amazing balloon sculptures donated by Kaul. Photo gallery on TCPalm.com/Luminaries.

And, the Treasure Coast Photography Center, a nonprofit club, has purchased two printers and supplied a gaggle of photographers in order to give every child who attended a photo with Santa, and another by the Christmas tree.

In addition, support for the event came from David Smythe, Jackson Drugs, The C.O.R.E. Program (Comprehensive Offender Rehabilitation & Education), Pat Austin, Crystal Samuel, Pullin Drag Charters, Fort Pierce Lions Club, Tin Roof Bar & Grill, Traxx Entertainment, Publix Charities, Midway Dental Center, the Atkinson Family Foundation: Gene Atkinson and Jodi Harvey, John and Carole Romano, Linda Tuininga, and Greg Pickett.

Established in 1958, New Horizons is the most comprehensive mental health agency in the region, with eight facilities in four counties helping children and adults on their road to recovery. To learn about the wide range of inpatient and outpatient services, visit www.nhtcinc.org or call 772-468-5600.