

## First 5 gives supplies to families with children under five

*Local churches, 4H and community volunteers come together to assist with giveaway process*

By Cheryl Senn  
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Research shows that when families cannot meet their basic needs, this additional stress results in children who are more likely to suffer from abuse and neglect, according to information provided by First 5 Fresno County's Bringing Accessible Supplies into Communities (BASIC) project.

Grace Community Church (GCC) was the location of the basic supply giveaway this year. Church members Ana Hernandez, Erika Cibrian and Samantha Lara organized the event. Hernandez said the group started to organize the event in October with GCC Pastor Sam Estes.

"We were able to help 112 families in need with pajamas, coats, a box of food per family, diapers and wipes for all the kids under the age of five with 200 children being helped," said Hernandez. The families were pre-registered.

Hernandez said the church was able to give the families an additional gift of a box of laundry detergent, softener and bleach along with crayons and a coloring activity for the kids.

The Sanger First 5 BASIC giveaway was one of nine such giveaways that will take place in Fresno County over the next month.

"It's a privilege to be able to serve our community. It's really an honor. The whole reason we exist, is to reach our community. So, anyway we can do that and do it effectively, that's what we are about," said Estes. Hernandez said there were many church and community service groups who volunteered along with the GCC members to make the event a success. "We are thankful for all the volunteers," said Hernandez. Hernandez said volunteers came from 4H, HOPE Sanger, Fresno Pacific University and the Sanger Community of Caring Task Force. "Seeing the people that were receiving and the volunteers that were giving, that is what makes these events exciting," said Sanger Mayor Joshua Mitchell.

Hernandez said families started lining up at 7:30 a.m. for the 9 a.m. scheduled giveaway and there were more families seeking vouchers than the amount of vouchers available and said she sees a real need here in Sanger. Estes said, "The need here in Sanger is great." Estes said GCC gives away food during the week as well.

According to First 5 Fresno County, the program is focused on the first five years of life of a child and a tobacco tax is used to fund children's services. The organization exists to improve and enhance the lives of Fresno County children from zero to five and their families. "I think it is some of



The Alvarado family was one of the 112 families who participated in the giveaway event. L-R- Rogelio Alvarado, Yoslen Alvarad, Vivian Alvarado and Hieydi Alvarado. (Photo by Cheryl Senn)

the most important years of a child's life," said Mitchell," it is when they grow the fastest and when they learn the fastest."

Hieydi Alvarado, a mom with three children, all under five, was able to benefit from the giveaway. Alvarado said she has two kids in diapers. "It means a lot, because right now I'm not working," said Alvarado about the supplies being given away. Alvarado said it was easy to register and there should be more events like this in the community. Alvarado said she will be looking for other such events in the future to help her family.

Estes said GCC members really want to be able to reach out to the families in the community and, Estes said," we feel that this is just one way of doing it."

"One of the things that makes Sanger special is that there are people from different beliefs, different denominations and different churches, all with one purpose in mind, and that is to help serve one another," said Mitchell.