A Very, Merry Community Goodwill Gesture
Newark Walmart, Newark Police Department, Newark Central School District and the Wayne County Youth Advocate Programs Inc. recently joined hands to make this holiday season a little brighter for some local boys and girls.

Having twice helped facilitate a “Shop With A Cop” holiday event for local children at the Dewey Avenue Walmart in Greece when she was manager there, Pearl Miller, now the Newark Walmart general manager, contacted Newark Police Chief Mark Thoms earlier this fall to let him know about $3,000 in “Giving Grant” monies available locally.

Thoms reached out to Mark Miller, Director of Grants and Special Programs for the NCSD who wrote and helped secure the grant. Once obtained, Newark PD Sgt. Nick Dapolito began working with Newark Walmart to coordinate the community-wide event.

The school district, in conjunction with Wayne County YAP, identified families, who for various reason might greatly benefit from some assistance at this time of year.
Meanwhile, some members of the Newark PD, during November, participated in a “No Shave November” event, organized by Officer Dan Weegar, in which each participant paid $100 for the right to grow a beard. Upon becoming involved with the Walmart Giving Grant program, this was extended through December for an additional $100 and a total of $2,800 was raised during the two months.

The “No Shave” fundraiser raised $2,800 to provide assistance to a local family heavily impacted by a tragic crime earlier, a local family and fellow village employee and the remainder was used to provide some additional gift cards for the “Shop With A Cop” event.
Forty-three youngsters participated in the December 14th Walmart shopping event at which each child was given a $125 gift card to spend on toys and other items they picked out while shopping with a Newark PD member or a Wayne County YAP Program staff member. While the event was happening, a few observing Walmart patrons contributed an additional $220 more allowing a few more youngsters to participate.
Included in this 4-hour charitable event, organized by Newark PD Sergeant Nick Dapolito, was craft making and refreshments for children in the rear of the store who were waiting to shop with one of 11 members of the Newark PD including Thoms, Dapolito, Investigators Gary VerStraete and Jay Warren, Sgt. Randy Rice and Officers Dan Weegar, Brandon Salerno, Greg DeBoerdere Jacob Jackson, Tom Robertson, Pat Latta, Newark PD clerk and Mike Crespo, Wayne County YAP Director and James Schuler, a Wayne County YAP Assistant Director.

After shopping concluded, Walmart provided a pizza lunch for participants in the same location.
“I think it was great for the kids and the community,” Pearl Miller said later, noting she wants to do the same things with Newark PD and NCSD next year.

“It was a pleasure working the Newark Police Department on this project,” Mark Miller said. “It is a clear reflection of what the heart of our Newark Community looks like. School, police and a community partner, Walmart, working together to help out our families who most need it. By helping create positive connections between the Newark Police force and our young children, Newark Central School District was able to play a part in attaining our vision of reaching every student, every day. Newark Central School District wrote the grant and helped the Police Department connect with families in need, but it was the NPD officers, Chief Thoms and Pearl, the Walmart general manager, who did the heavy work to make this project a success!”

“It was a great event,” Chief Thoms said. “The kids were very excited and had a lot of fun. It was wonderful!”

“Newark Officers were honored to be able to give back to the children of the community. Our agency was able to donate $2800, combining that with the Walmart Giving Grant and event donations to total $6000 to assist 43 children in Newark to buy items that they need and want. The morning was spent getting to know the children in the community, building bonds and relationships that should extend well into their adulthood,” Officer Weegar said.

“The Newark Police Department feels very strongly about community policing, knowing the children and adults in our area and want to be seen as an agency that can be used in many different ways than just law enforcement,” said Sgt. Dapolito.