



*Mission of Love*



"You are not here to save the world, but are here to touch the hands that are within your reach."

## Reservation family revels in Rotarians' good deeds

By Mary Garrigan, Journal staff | Tuesday, December 23, 2008

[Next Story](#)

Thirteen members of the Fast Wolf family were on the receiving end of the Christmas presents, but it was the Rotarians who got the biggest gift of all.

"We had a ball," Maryann Jacobs, a member of the Rushmore Rotary Club, said as the results of a Christmas shopping spree greeted the Fast Wolfs at the Tuesday morning meeting of the Rushmore Rotary Club.

- "I'm covered with chills," fellow Rotarian Darla Crown said as she watched the large family from the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation tear into their gifts. "Giving is what Christmas is all about."

Mary Fast Wolf's cheeks were covered in tears as she accepted the holiday-inspired generosity of two local Rotary clubs. "I'm just in awe," Mary said.

The Rotary clubs adopted the Mary and Varden Fast Wolf family after they lost their Red Shirt Table home and all their possessions in a July fire.



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As the family moved into their donated replacement home this fall, the clubs delivered a freezer filled with groceries. They wanted to continue the relationship this Christmas, gathering gifts that ranged from handmade fleece blankets and new snow boots for everybody, as well as toys and games for all the kids. The family toured Storybook Island's Christmas lights Monday and stayed overnight in three hotel rooms donated by Howard Johnson Inn and Suites.

"It's wonderful," said Lakota Breeze, one of the teenage girls the Fast Wolfs have welcomed into their home. She and her foster sisters were opening gifts of clothes, bubble bath, earrings and purses on Tuesday.

The Rotarians also raised \$400 in cash for the Fast Wolfs, and there was a little something special from Santa for Mary in a pink Victoria's Secret box.

"I told her to open that package in private," Crown said.

The Fast Wolfs have opened their home and hearts to many children over the years, through foster care, adoption and the simple need for a safe place to stay. "They always make room, no matter what an inconvenience, to those who are in need," said Kathleen Price, the founder of the Mission of Love Foundation. Mission of Love, an Ohio charity, purchased, renovated and donated the home the family shares now, as well as the wood-burning stove that is its



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sole source of heat. Two surplus Air Force base housing units were moved onto the site of their former home and combined into one seven-bedroom house. "We miss our old house, but we're very grateful," Lakota Breeze said.

"Knowing that the family of Mary and Varden have a place to call home this Christmas is and will be my Christmas present of a lifetime," Price said. "Christmas is love, and this particular family needed to stay together in order to continue to be such a wonderful example of what love and compassion can do."

As he loaded his pickup to overflowing with gifts and other donations for the trip home, Varden Fast Wolf was already planning to put his gift – a toolbox filled with an assortment of shiny new tools – to good use. The extreme cold weather has caused some of the home's water pipes to freeze.

"I'll be under the house, working on the pipes," Varden said.

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