

November 15, 2012 | By Christine Clark

## Students Reach Out to San Diego Families in Need for “Operation Santa”

**UC San Diego’s service fraternity Alpha Phi Omega again raises funds and donates gifts for the holiday season; the deadline to nominate families for the program is Nov. 19**



*The campus’s service fraternity, Alpha Phi Omega, sponsors “Operation Santa” each year to bring Christmases to families in need all over San Diego County. Photos by Erik Jepsen/UC San Diego Publications*

Students at the University of California, San Diego are spreading the holiday spirit with the annual service project, “Operation Santa.” The campus’s service fraternity, Alpha Phi Omega, sponsors “Operation Santa” each year to bring holiday joy to families in need throughout San Diego County.

Many of the “Operation Santa” families the fraternity reaches out to are led by single mothers as well as those who are victims of domestic violence, facing illness, experiencing the loss of a family member or are struggling financially. The families selected will be provided with food and gifts in time for the holidays.

Alpha Phi Omega is still accepting nominations for families until Nov. 19. The fraternity is striving to raise funds so that as many people as possible can be selected to receive help from “Operation Santa.” To nominate a family or donate to “Operation Santa,” go to [www.operationsantasd.org](http://www.operationsantasd.org).

According to Connie Tran, chair of “Operation Santa,” the experience of bringing food and gifts to families is an emotional and humbling one. “When I meet these families, I realize that my small contribution can actually make a difference in the lives of those struggling with health issues, job displacement and financial worries during the holidays,” Tran said. “This is what motivates Alpha Phi Omega to continue to organize this service project each year. We want to start the holiday season off right and give back to the community.”



*Many participants of this year's donation drive will gather together for an "Operation Santa" Workshop from 8 to 10 p.m. on Tuesday, Nov. 27 in the Price Center. Members from different student organizations and/or community members who have adopted a family will wrap gifts.*

Tran added that with the economy still in recovery, “Operation Santa” is still looking for donations of money and gifts, which can be made through their website.

“Operation Santa” was established six years ago and has benefited the San Diego community in many ways. Through the project, Alpha Phi Omega organizes fundraisers, including working concessions at Qualcomm Stadium and wrapping gifts at Barnes & Noble.

Many participants of this year's donation drive will gather together for an “Operation Santa” workshop from 8 to 10 p.m. on Tuesday, Nov. 27 in the Price Center. Members from different student organizations and/or community members who have adopted a family will wrap gifts. There also will be refreshments and the student group, the Tritones, will perform holiday music.

Tran said her experience being chair of “Operation Santa” this year has been life changing. “It has opened my eyes to not only the variety of circumstances that other families are in, but also my own abilities and how much I can do to help,” she said. “From my experience as chair, I have learned to utilize ambition, philanthropy, passion, education and networking as tools to help these San Diego families.”

Alpha Phi Omega is one of many UC San Diego service oriented student organizations. UC San Diego currently has more than 560 registered student organizations and more than 100 of those organizations have a primary focus on community service. A total of 18,528 students are engaged in a form of community service and in 2011, the university's students completed 1,963,380 hours of community service.

For the past three years, UC San Diego has been recognized by *Washington Monthly* as the nation's top college in rankings measuring "what colleges are doing for the country" and concurrently, the campus has been named to the President's Community Service Honor Roll with distinction for its support of volunteering, service-learning and civic engagement.

For more information on "Operation Santa" or to make a donation, please contact [operationsanta@apo.org](mailto:operationsanta@apo.org) or visit their website at [www.operationsantasd.org](http://www.operationsantasd.org).

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