

VICTOR G. MARIA
BICYCLES FOR CHRISTMAS - 2002:
SPACE CENTER ROTARY CLUB

Shopping for one another for Christmas was becoming a stressful event for my wife and me. About fifteen years ago my wife and I decided that we would no longer buy each other Christmas presents but would rather buy presents for foster children in the 3 Wishes for Christmas program. She would pick 3 girls to shop for and I would pick 3 boys. It was fun. Then one morning in 1991 after buying gifts for the boys I had selected I awoke thinking of three or four youngsters who had requested only one gift - A BIKE. I could not think of any reason why I had not selected one of these youngsters who wanted a bike. It was then that I thought of a way to make this happen.

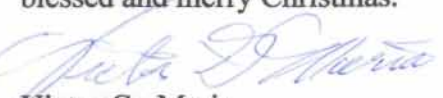
I took two sets of Russian "Gorbie" dolls to Space Center Rotary Club and auctioned them, collecting \$175 each. That year I bought 7 bicycles and gave them to the 3 wishes program. Every year since, I have been buying bicycles for Christmas. After a few years I decided to ask Rotarians from my club to donate towards the bikes. Each year the number of donations grew and I was soon buying 50 bicycles with helmets for children of the Houston area.. Last year we collected and gave 30 bikes, 30 scooters and 75 helmets.

This year we were blessed for we were able to buy 81 bicycles, 50 scooters and 86 helmets for the Houston Chronicle GOODFELLOWS program. I gave one of these bikes and one helmet to a needy local girl. I then got more bikes and gave 5 bicycles to the Harris County Youth Village and 5 bicycles to the Bay Area Turning Point. We were all truly blessed in being able to play a small part in providing a joyous Christmas for youngsters in our area.

I want to thank my Space Center Rotary Club Rotarians who donated towards these gifts and to Wal-Mart Superstore and it's employees who were so very helpful and understanding in making these gifts available for young Harris County children..

This is the second year I have been providing bicycles and scooters to Goodfellows for Christmas and it has truly been a very pleasurable experience.

I wish all of those involved with the Houston Chronicle Goodfellows program a very blessed and merry Christmas.



Victor G. Maria
Space Center Rotary Club