



MONA REEDER/Staff Photographer

Isabel Bosch (left), 8, eagerly helped Cynthia Huerta, 6, at the WHO (Women Helping Others) Foundation's Mother's Day shopping event. Andrew Diaz, 7, got a little bored.

WEST DALLAS

'Pay' for studies, chores lets kids make their moms' day

Choosing is hard part for children shopping at volunteer-run 'store'

By **JEFF MILLER**
Special Contributor

Eight-year-old Orlando Hernandez was torn between the purse and the tote bag, the watch and the wallet. A loudly ticking clock and a studio audience couldn't have heightened the drama.

Such were the dilemmas faced Friday afternoon by Orlando and 137 other West Dallas youngsters who attend the Trinity River Mission as they participated in the fourth annual Mother's Day shopping event sponsored by Dallas-based BeautiControl through its WHO (Women Helping Others) Foundation.

The kids had each earned up to \$100 in "spending money" through after-school activities at the center on Singleton Boulevard during the last two months.

"It's like, 'Should I get this? No. Should I get that?'" said a laughing Brenda Sanchez, 17, who attends the mission and has been a reading buddy to younger students there for five years.

The Trinity River Mission was started in 1988. It welcomes disadvantaged youngsters after school Mondays through Thursdays, providing a place to do homework and to learn about volunteering. It was the combination of school-work, helping around the cen-

To help or learn more

Trinity River Mission
214-744-6774
trinityrivermission.org

WHO Foundation
972-458-0601
whofoundation.org

ter and participating in fundraisers that enabled the kids to earn the "WHO bucks" to buy up to four gifts for their mothers.

The idea for the shopping event came from Cindy Turek, the WHO Foundation's executive director for the last eight years. It was held in conjunction with Christmas for two years, then moved to Mother's Day.

"At holiday time, some kids have a difficult time being able to give gifts," Turek said. "Just because they might get their food at a food pantry doesn't make them any less beings. Partnering with this after-school program, this provides the pride of accomplishment. They're not going to be handed anything."

Dolores Sosa Green, director of the mission for five years, said the short-term program incentive didn't really change the kids' behavior.

"Our kids are pretty well-behaved anyway," she said. "One of the things we teach the kids when they start coming is, 'You respect your elders.' It's always been a part of the culture here, since before I came. They will ask, 'How can I help you?'"

The kids were divided into groups of about 10 for the shopping spree, eliminating the prospect of a Black Friday onslaught. Each was paired with a T-shirted volunteer from BeautiControl who served as a personal shopping partner.

Prices for the items, all donated by BeautiControl, ranged from \$5 for a cap (bright green with rhinestones), a notepad and some small jewelry to \$40 for a tote bag. After the items were selected, volunteers helped the kids pack gift bags.

Among the shopping companions was Albert Bosch, BeautiControl's president. His routine was to show everything available before the young consumers decided what to buy.

"They tend to have something that already registered," Bosch said. "My mom loves watches and sunglasses.' That seems to be the boys. Girls go for bags, jewelry and perfume. They're programmed genetically."

Orlando, a second-grader at Sidney Lanier Elementary, finally made his choices from his \$95 budget — not revealed here in case his mother hasn't opened her gift bag yet — then joined the other shoppers in the center's cafeteria.

As he ate pizza, he seemed pleased and also somewhat relieved.

"That was fun," he said.

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