

# FOCUS celebrates 32 years and \$1 million in giving

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Friends of Children United Society — FOCUS — held its annual Fall Membership Party at the Star Park Circle home of Scott and Susan McMillin. Attendees included members of the Coronado charity as well as representatives of FOCUS’s beneficiary organizations.

Among this year’s beneficiaries were Monarch School, Armed Services YMCA, Hazeltine School, Big Brothers and Sisters, Coronado SAFE and Coronado Unified School District (FOCUS paid for several sixth-grade camperships). In the biggest expenditure in its 32-year history (\$26,000), FOCUS retrofitted a cargo van with pullout racks to be a traveling baby store to serve outlying areas of the county for San Diego Family Health Care Centers. Using Monopoly-type money, called “Baby Bucks,” the health center encourages parents to bring their babies in for checkups. When they do, they can spend the Baby Bucks at the “FOCUS Baby Boutique.”

Now FOCUS is gearing up to host its annual Christmas party for foster children who reside at San Pasqual Academy. At a party at Il Fornaio restaurant in Coronado, the kids enjoy pizza, games and visits from Santa Claus and Mrs. Claus. “Every child gets their top three wishes granted,” said Suzanne Manuel, FOCUS president. “We buy the gifts, wrap them up and label them with the kids’ names. At the party, we’re all Santa’s helpers. It’s one of my favorite things!”

Linda Dorn and Sharyn Blongiewicz serve as FOCUS executive vice presidents, charged with planning eight meetings and three or four fundraising events annually. Last year a standout event was a Kingston Trio concert. Rosemary Penny is first vice president, fundraising; Vicki Bernitt and Helen Murphy are second vice presidents, membership and Daphne Fields is third vice president, projects.

Rather than giving money to organizations, FOCUS asks for wish lists. Then its members are assigned to be “shoppers” for specific charities and that’s where the real fun begins. To date, FOCUS has raised more than \$1 million.

FOCUS membership is open to all (including men); for more information, go to [focus-sd.org](http://focus-sd.org).



Marty Vales, Katie Bradel and Candace Haden of



Monarch School Tailisha Martin and Candi Mayes of Dependency Legal Group



Kelly Paopao and Liz Broznan of Christie's Place



Scott and Susan McMillin; FOCUS President Suzanne Manuel



Marianna Polles, Carole Hoover-Head, R.G. Head, and



Doug St. Denis

Linda Dorn and Sharyn Blongiewicz



Scott Suckow and Julie Fortune of Mental Health Systems