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For Children of Victims, Generosity and Some Joy

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Juanita Brown — whose daughter Janice Brown, an accountant at Marsh and McLennan, was lost in the World Trade Center tragedy — spent five hours at Pier 94 in Manhattan yesterday with her 11-year-old grandson and other young relatives.

"They had a good time for a full day," said a pleased Brown, carrying shopping bags of fire trucks, dolls and games for the youngsters.

The Browns were among the more than 500 family members of victims of the Sept. 11 terrorist attack who went to the pier yesterday for a "Winter Wonderland" event, aimed at helping them receive presents for the holidays without making it feel like charity, according to Rosemarie O'Keefe, commissioner of the city Community Assistance Unit, who planned the day.

It seemed to work for Edward Lee, who brought his 3-year-old grandson Nashawn.

"It brings a little joy to the holiday season," said Lee, of Brooklyn, whose 49-year-old wife, Juanita, a receptionist at AON Corp., was lost in the tragedy. "We appreciate everything."

Family members of the more than 3,000 people who perished were invited to the pier, where the mayor's office set up a family assistance center in September for grief counseling and other services.

Mayor Rudolph Giuliani said the event was intended to give the families "something to enjoy."

"It's very important that even if you have to work at it, that you go out of your way to celebrate the holidays," Giuliani said, "because we don't want these terrorists to have taken our holidays from us."

Boutiques were set up for popular brands such as Tommy Hilfiger fashions, Disney, Barbie and Honda toy trucks, as well as makeup, perfume and homemade quilts from Iowa and Arizona, O'Keefe said.

Depending on how many children or grandchildren a victim had, families received a number of credits on a "snowflake card," which they carried to each boutique to "spend" by selecting from thousands of donated gifts. A toy truck, for example, "cost" five snowflake hole-punches on the card, while Barbie was worth two or three punches.

All families received a cash gift from Disney and a "Gift of New York" card, which gives free entry to five family members to basketball games, museums and cultural events through next April. The Red Cross served sandwiches and hot chocolate, O'Keefe said.

"We didn't miss a trick," O'Keefe said.

Hyacinth Blackman of Brooklyn, who lost her 26-year-old son Bawlewa, left feeling bittersweet. "This is good for the children," she said, having taken her granddaughter to the festivities. But, she added, "After I go home, I'm going to feel depressed."

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