



News Release

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Ho Ho Ho For Families with Disabilities

Sensitive Santa Helps Children and Their Families Experience the Holiday Season

Salem, VA – The Christmas season had a very special beginning for 65 children with special needs and their families. Softly falling snow set the perfect stage for the second annual Sensitive Santa event. Boys and girls with their parents had the opportunity to enjoy craft activities and treats to ease them into visiting with Santa.

For many children with disabilities, visiting Santa at the mall or in other busy areas is an overwhelming experience. Easterseals UCP in North Carolina and Virginia offers Sensitive Santa events in several cities to help families experience a traditional visit with Santa Claus. The environment is quiet and calm, and families have scheduled times to arrive to avoid the challenge of waiting. Several returning families make this event a family tradition.

Throughout the day there were also many hugs, high fives and even a fist bump or two. While there were a few here and there who weren't quite sure about the big guy in red, children, parents and volunteers alike found many things to love about Sensitive Santa.



Jack, who is three years old with autism, recently transitioned from the Easterseals UCP Early Intervention Program in Salem, VA. His mom said Jack loved Sensitive Santa, "We had a fun experience that was stress free. Jack has a hard time waiting in lines so the activity waiting room worked well. Santa was gentle and friendly. Jack got a kick out of the high fives. We will definitely be back next year!"

For 6-year-old Evan, this was his second year visiting Sensitive Santa. Evan's mother told us, "This is a great experience, not only for the child/children with disabilities, but also for the entire family. The people are welcoming and friendly, and a normally stressful event goes much smoother for all. Easterseals UCP have helped my family so much. Thank you for all you do. My heart is full."



So many smiles came from Trent, an 8-year-old boy with autism, who has attended Camp Easterseals UCP. He enjoyed visiting with Santa for the second time this year. Trent spent several amazing minutes sharing holiday smiles with Santa and even gave Santa his customary greeting of touching heads.

Thank you to local businesses and the staff at Easterseals UCP for making Sensitive Santa a success for children and their families.

Happy Holidays from Easterseals UCP!

ABOUT EASTERSEALS UCP

Easterseals UCP works side-by-side with adults and children who are managing disabilities and mental health challenges. We serve as a nurse, a therapist, a social worker, a job counselor, a teacher, a psychologist, a caregiver and a compassionate friend all rolled into one. Our purpose is to help neighbors in need achieve better days and live their best possible life.

Learn more about Easterseals UCP at www.eastersealsucp.com

