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## **Santa's literary efforts reap toys for tots**

**By Torrey Webb**  
STAFF WRITER

HAYWARD- Santa Claus is coming to town today to sign books full of children's letters. Dressed in his annual Santa garb, Bruce McGuy will pop into the Longs Drug Store at 243 W. Jackson St. from 1 to 3 p.m. to sign copies of his two books: "Even Santa Cries Sometimes" and "Even Santa Laughs".

His proceeds from sales of the two books- which Longs carries- go to the Toys for Tots program. The books are a collection of more than 3,000 letters McGuy has received from kids who enjoyed his stints as "Santa" during many a Christmas past. His responses are included. "Everybody wins. Children meet Santa Claus, parents learn more about their children and kids get toys. Last year I had to fill 2,000 orders," McGuy said. He always has been big on Christmas, ever since his mother would put candy outside his Fresno home just to watch children take it. "She would look out the window and just laugh."

He first donned his Santa Suit in 1979 to visit a day care center.

"I was 240 pounds, had a great laugh, and just love children. Everybody loved it. I was supposed to do it for four hours, but instead ended up staying seven." And that's when children started giving him letters. McGuy read them, and unlike many other Santas, responded to every single one.

"They are my treasure," McGuy said. "Kids have a lot to say. They just need to be listened to and not just told what to do. I want parents to see what kids are feeling. That way it helps everyone grow."

Some of the letters ask for toys, money or even that famous reindeer, Rudolph.

Other are more serious.

McGuy said one 9-year-old boy from Sunnyvale wanted a gun to protect himself from a gang that had been harassing him.

One letter tore him up: A Union City girl asked that he send toys to heaven for her baby brother, who had recently died. "She drew a coffin with lights and a cross on it. After many hours and many more tears, I wrote the response, 'even Santa cries sometimes.'"

That letter inspired him to publish the two books.

McGuy didn't have a difficult time getting stores to carry his books because after Christmas he buys back the ones that weren't sold.

"He does great things for the kids," said Max Timms, corporate advertising supervisor for Longs. "I hope it works out. We get our profit and the rest he gives to Toys for Tots."

He already has invested \$60,000 to publish the books, but isn't trying to recoup the cost.

"I am not looking for it, except maybe when I am 90 years old and need it. There is nothing in the world like giving it yourself," said the 39-year-old contractor, who knocks off work the last three months of a year to devote more time to playing Santa and answering letters.

McGuy wont accept a dollar for playing Santa. "Sometimes I'll have 200 kids waiting for me on my front yard."

His Christmas decorations, which he starts taking out around Halloween, feature 32,000 light bulbs, inflatable reindeer and a mailbox just for letters to Santa. "It's a peaceful place to come. Sometimes people come by just to look,"he said. McGuy said he intends to write more books to help parent-child relationships and continue to raise money for children.

"Kids are under stress too. We need to be there for them and let them know they are part of a family – or else some gang will let them be part of theirs."