

From the November 16, 2006 edition of the *Blossom Valley Times*:

South Bay Santa Still Giving After 25 Years

By Sean Eastwood

Special to the Times

For South San Jose entrepreneur Bruce McGuy, giving to the community is as much a tradition as turkey on Thanksgiving or presents at Christmas. The owner of Work Zone Apparel & Promotions and an independent distributor for XanGo, a dietary supplement company, McGuy continues to donate 10 percent of his company's profits to local charities and non-profit organizations, just as he's been doing for the last 25 years.

In 1991, McGuy founded Blossom Valley Realty and focused his generous spirit on local schools. "I believe that our children are an investment; money and time spent on them now pays great dividends later!" he says. However, Bruce wasn't the type to write a check to the local school and sit back; he loved (and still loves) interacting with the children.

If Bruce's idea called for the students who had improved their reading to receive a barbeque lunch, you would find Bruce on one afternoon with an apron, flipping burgers for the students. If the reward was a new bike for improved scholastic improvement, Bruce would be on hand to present the prize. It wasn't long before the students knew that seeing Bruce on the campus meant something special was about to happen.

It is in his alter ego as Santa Claus that Bruce finds the greatest reward. In 1988, Bruce began decorating his house for the holidays as part of a friendly neighborhood contest. However, the other neighbors underestimated Bruce's love of Christmas; his house sported 34 thousand lights, animated displays of reindeer and scenes of holiday cheer. The display drew local families to come visit, and many of the families had young children with them. In 1989, he added a small painted mailbox with the label "Letters to Santa", more for decoration than anything else. It was the beginning of a new era for Bruce. He discovered that children had started to leave their letters to Santa in the mailbox, so he decided to read the letters, and reply to those who had included an address.

The letters weren't merely "wish lists" of toys and games; lots of children see Santa Claus as a confidant and friend, and the letters to Santa were a rare glimpse into a child's world. They told jokes, asked questions about Mrs. Claus and Rudolph, or asked questions about the world in which they were growing up. Some of the stories were funny and happy, others were heartbreaking. How would you respond to a letter from a child who only wants five dollars to buy a present for his hard-working mother? Or a

child who wants to know if her baby brother who recently died will get any presents in heaven?

Bruce took it upon himself to start composing replies to the letters after work and on the weekends. Desperate to share the letters, stories and insight the letters had brought him, so he founded Home Run Publishing in 1993 and published his first book "Even Santa Cries Sometimes". The book was a hit, and Bruce followed it with three other titles, "Even Santa Laughs Sometimes", "What Color is Santa", and "Just Ask Santa", each title more successful than the last. In keeping with the "Santa Spirit", Bruce gave 100 percent of the proceeds from the books back to the community. Bruce has made all four of the books available online for free at www.brucemcguy.com. Bruce also has plans for two more books in the near future.

He's always had a soft spot for children, but Bruce understands that even adults can use a little help now and then. As the owner of Valley Painting and Maintenance, Bruce continued his tradition of donating 10 percent of the company's profits, and shared his unorthodox way of doing business: no written contracts and no payment requested until the job was done. Bruce had learned early on that a good reputation was a key to success, and he brought this idea into his work. "A handshake is good enough for me," he shared recently. "I ran Valley Painting and Maintenance for 25 years that way, and never had any problems. I run my company like a business I'd want to do business with and learned that people responded well to that idea. Rather than merely wanting their money, I wanted to make them happy with the work we'd done. If they were happy, so was I." Bruce continues this philosophy in his current role as owner of [Work Zone Apparel & Promotions](#), which helps explain why the company has grown more than 100% per year since its conception.

Even after Bruce retired Valley Painting and Maintenance, he still maintained his generous spirit; he recently met with Betsy Doss, new principal at Rachel Carson Elementary School, and decided to sponsor a reading incentive program for the students. Bruce, who formerly served for three years as the PTA President for Carson School, purchased four bicycles and two \$50 gift certificates from Toys 'R Us. The prizes will be awarded to the students who have shown the most improvement in their reading. The bikes are currently on display in the Media Center at Carson school, and serve as a great incentive to Carson School's young readers.