

As you know, this is the time of year when children feverishly craft their Christmas lists, write letters to Santa, and dream of the presents they might find waiting for them under the tree, when every girl and boy has visions not of sugarplums, but of Sony PlayStations. The toys change with each generation, but the *desire* is as old as time. But as we get older, every generation learns what the previous one already knows: This time of year isn't just for *getting*. It's for *giving*. Enter the Burrito Boyz.

iPads. iPhones. MacBooks. As Michael Johnson looked over his son's Christmas list, he felt increasingly unnerved by the boy's tendency to focus more on gadgets and gizmos than on giving.¹ That's when he decided something needed to change. It was time for his son to learn what the world was like off-screen.

So, Michael and his wife Mehrnaz came up with a novel idea. One December morning shortly before Christmas, they woke their son Alec and his friend Luke and put them to work making egg-and-cheese burritos. The boys made fifty-four in total, then followed Alec's parents into downtown San Diego to hand them out to the homeless and hungry.²

At first, the two boys thought it was torture. Punishment for doing something wrong. And at first, the two parents thought it would be just a temporary diversion. A brief but vital lesson about how most people don't have the luxury of wishing for iThis or e-That. But the next Sunday, the family decided to do it again. And again. And again.

From fifty-four burritos to hundreds at a time. From just Alec and Luke to seven other boys from their soccer team. Each was given a job. One would scoop the eggs. Another was in charge of cheese. A third oversaw baking, and so on.¹ Soon, they no longer needed to be told what to do. They *volunteered* to do it. Soon they realized that giving back wasn't just fun. It was *rewarding*. And thus, the Burrito Boyz were born.

That was 9 years ago. The Johnsons' little project has blossomed into a full-blown non-profit organization. Every Sunday, the boys still go out, giving burritos and bottled water to people in need. They also provide clothes, books, and joy to everyone they meet. As one person put it, "I really look forward to my Sundays. It's amazing to see these boys. They've got the most beautiful hearts."³

Now, almost a decade later, having served over 75,000 meals⁴ to their community, the Burrito Boyz know what our parents knew, and their parents, too: that little acts of kindness, of generosity, of *service* are far more valuable than any gadget ever could be.

I hope you enjoyed this story. From everyone at Petra Financial Solutions, I wish you a wonderful holiday season spent with family and friends. Thank you for all the kindness and generosity you have shown me.

¹ "How 1 dad inspired teenagers to make burritos for the homeless," *Yahoo*, <https://news.yahoo.com/blogs/the-upbeat/1-dad-inspired-teenage-kids-33-000-burritos-151030526.html>

² "Teens Deliver 33,000 Burritos to the Homeless," *Daily Good*, <http://www.dailygood.org/story/517/teens-deliver-33-000-burritos-to-the-homeless-the-huffington-post/>

³ "Burrito Boys deliver food and friendship," *The San Diego Union-Tribune*, <https://www.sandiegouniontribune.com/sdut-burrito-boys-deliver-food-and-friendship-2011dec23-story.html>

⁴ "About Us," *The Burrito Boyz*, <http://www.burritoboyz.org/about-us/>