

Chacko's holds special event so that local kids could bowl away the hours before Santa delivers the top gifts on their wish lists

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[On pins and needles](#)

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WILKES-BARRE – Strikes, spares and funny-looking bowling shoes were the first thing on a few children's minds Wednesday morning when their parents dropped them off at Chacko's Bowling Center.



Santa Claus bowls a game or two at Chacko's Bowling Lanes in Wilkes-Barre on Wednesday during their Christmas Eve bowling party for kids. Bowling alongside Santa is Jared Perdikis, 9, of Swoyersville.

Hunter Griffith, 5, of Wilkes-Barre, left, and Jason Gutkowski, 11, of Wilkes-Barre, react to Hunter's near spare.

But, by evening, the boys and girls said they expected to have only one thing to think about – Santa Claus.

Nearly 30 children showed up Wednesday morning for a day of bowling, movies and crafts at Chacko's as part of its Christmas Eve bowling party that it has hosted for the past three years.

It's a time when children can have some fun while parents finish the last of their holiday errands, said Kara Chacko, Chacko's event manager. "The kids are going to have a good time and we keep them occupied on a day they don't have school and their parents can get stuff done," Chacko said.

While Lori and Shawn Ward of Drums finished some last-minute shopping, their 7-year-old daughter, Mckaylia, was spending the day at the bowling alley. "It's a convenient and safe environment for kids to have fun," Lori Ward said. "It keeps them busy."

Mckaylia, who said she would be on the "nice" list this year, knew the answer to the age-old question of "What do you want for Christmas?"

"A dollhouse," she said, adding she decided she would go to bed around 9 p.m. and wake up around 6 a.m. to open her gifts.

Mckaylia's cousin, Amanda Ward, 9, of Dallas, said she asked Santa for a laptop computer and an iPod.

But she is realistic.

"I might not get both, but I'll get one or the other," Ward said. "And I'd like a pair of slippers, because they're fuzzy."

Ward said she got up in the middle of the night last year to see if Kris Kringle had made a stop at her house yet, but won't do that this year.

"Now I'll wait until 8 a.m.," she said, noting she also can be found on Santa's "nice" list.

From 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., children ranging in age from 6 to 10, bowled, ate lunch, watched a movie, made crafts and visited with Santa. Chacko said registration was required, but she had room for a few walk-ins, and charged a \$15 fee.

While making snowman rulers to measure snowfall, 5-year-old Hunter Griffith said he might have been excited about bowling and making pins fall, but he was more excited about the possibility of Santa bringing him a toy truck and Benderoos, flexible sticks children can use to form anything their imagination can conjure up.

"My favorite part (of Christmas) is unwrapping the presents," Griffith said.

An 11-year-old Jason Gutkowski agreed.

Gutkowski, of Wilkes-Barre, said he asked the jolly old elf for a guitar since he's been taking lessons.

"We put lights outside so that Santa can find our house," Gutkowski said, as he finished his snowman ruler, complete with blue scarf and black top hat.

Gutkowski and Griffith said they had been good all year and knew for sure Santa would bring what they asked for.

The children ate a lunch, with their choice of a hot dog, chicken tenders, hamburger or pizza, and completed their crafts and bowling frames in groups of five, with supervision of a Chacko's employee for each group.

Chacko said the youngsters had a choice of three Christmas movies to watch and received a gift bag and photo with Santa.

"I have to work every Christmas Eve," Chacko said. "I like that there's (more) people here (than usual in the morning), and it's fun to see the kids bowl and do crafts. When the day's over, I realize it wasn't so bad to go to work today after all."

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