

<http://westminsterwindow.com/stories/Program-gives-back-to-employees,164523?>



## Program gives back to employees



Courtesy photo

Dasia Rojas, daughter of Tokyo Joe's employee, Tanjie Rojas, was one of 47 children who participated in Tokyo Joe's Back to School Program, which provides basic school supplies and a \$50 shopping spree for the children of Tokyo Joe's employees. Dasia did her shopping at the Westminster Wal-Mart at 136th Avenue and I-25.

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According to the National Retail Federation, parents will spend an average of \$90 per child on school supplies. With more than one child in the family, that number can quickly rise.

To help with the cost and stress of buying school supplies, employees at Tokyo Joe's, an Asian-inspired fast casual restaurant, received a nice boost through Marci's Back to School Program, which provides basic school supplies to children ages 5-18.

Created by Marci Leith, a former director of operations and wife of Tokyo Joe's founder Larry Leith, the program also allows each child to spend up to \$50 on bonus items needed for school like clothes, shoes or backpacks. This is the seventh year for the program and Marci doesn't see it stopping any time soon.

"Years ago I ended up taking a kid of one of our employee's to run some errands with my daughter and me," she said. "It was right before school started and I heard the child talking about how they needed to get some school stuff, but money was tight. So I just ended up taking the child shopping for things and that's how the program started. I wanted to help all of my employees during the back to school season."

Marci said there is almost 100 percent participation among her employees with children. This year there were three shopping trips, one in the south metro area and two at the Wal-Mart in Westminster located at 136th Avenue and Interstate 25. The program has become quite popular not just for the employees, but also the students headed back to school.

"The kids are always excited to come and shop and pick out something they need but may not be able to get," Marci said. "They are grateful too because they understand the shopping spree is making a difference for mom and dad and that makes a difference for the family as a whole."

Kristi Knight is a director of operations for Tokyo Joe's and has been with the company for 13 years. She too has seen the difference the program makes each year for many employees, especially for the hourly employees.

"This can be a tough time of year for parents who have to buy supplies and clothes," Knight said. "It all adds up and it goes beyond the normal expenses for many of the

hourly employees. So it's great to see everyone so excited and happy. It means a lot to the employees that have more than one child."