

## Ducks Host Holiday Shopping Spree for Students from The Wooden Floor



by Jenelyn Russo  
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The Ducks continued their giving last Friday, as six deserving kids from [The Wooden Floor](#) were treated to a holiday shopping spree at the Wal-Mart in Foothill Ranch.

An after-school program located in Santa Ana, The Wooden Floor provides local kids from low-income families the opportunity to break the cycle of poverty through dance education and performance. Coupled with academic support and family counseling services, 375 students participate in intense dance training that helps them increase their confidence and self-esteem, paving the way for them to go on to college.

The success of this program is tremendous. Since 2005, *100 percent* of the graduates of The Wooden Floor have completed high school on time and have gone on to enroll in higher education, compared to 35 percent of their socioeconomic peers. The six students chosen for this event come from families very much in need this holiday season. Most were a little overwhelmed by all the attention paid to them that day. As Ducks staff members walked with them through the store and helped them pick out clothes to try on, these kids often went straight for the basics – sweatshirts, pants, socks, shoes – everyday clothing needs that will help fill their closets and relieve a bit of the financial pressure at home.

As they “modeled” their selections, which included plaid button-down shirts, Hello Kitty t-shirts and One Direction pajamas, I could see some sheepish smiles emerge. And many of the kids added gifts to their carts that will be under the tree next week for their siblings.

“I love to dance and learn new things,” said nine-year old Daniela about participating in the programs at The Wooden Floor. “It’s like home to me,” added 13-year old Hugo.

As much as I am a sports fan, I’m also a big believer in the arts and the positive change participating in programs like these can have on young lives. I spent my younger days in dance, and now my two daughters do the same. There is nothing quite like the feeling of accomplishment and pride that comes from performing on stage in front of your family and friends. The Wooden Floor provides these kids with that experience, and with that, a path out of the poverty that is their “normal”, showing them that they can have a brighter future.

Supporters of The Wooden Floor since 2006, the Ducks provided an unforgettable Christmas for these special kids that will no doubt impact them for years to come.

