

Cheektowaga Police required for Build-a-Bear's "irresponsible promotion"

By **Jim Herr** - July 12, 2018



CHEEKTOWAGA – Thousands of people descended on the Walden Galleria Thursday morning to wait in a line that lapped the entire mall by some eyewitness accounts for a Build-a-Bear promotion where customers would pay their own age for a stuffed animal.

The crowd started to form around 7:30 am Thursday and by 11:30 am Cheektowaga Police dispatchers were calling in help from neighboring law enforcement agencies to help control the crowd.

"Clearly what we had is a corporation who ran a very irresponsible promotion," Chief of Police David Zack told Cheektowaga Chronicle. "We've gotten reports – but I haven't verified them – that very similar situations are occurring across the nation and right now we have a lot of angry people, but they're also being very responsible. More than responsible. They're cooperating with us and we're trying to get people through the line and get the product that they were promised."

The store was shut down for a time and just before Noon, a handful of people were being let in by Cheektowaga Police while other officers were passing out vouchers.

The police department brass was seen outside the store brainstorming ideas from bringing in bottled water to providing snacks for the kids to help prevent the powder keg from being lit.

"Anything that will ease tension and let people understand that we're doing the best that we can and managing the situation the best we can. But, it's hot in here. People have been in line for a long time. We understand their frustration and we're just trying to make their wait a little bit more comfortable especially with all these young kids here," added Mr. Zack.

Cheektowaga Chronicle asked the chief how long the police department could continue to provide crowd control at the private facility before Build-a-Bear corporate would just shut the store down for the day.

"They'll be a discussion later," said Mr. Zack.

Build-a-Bear issued a statement on their website saying in part: "We understand that many Guests were turned away as, due to safety concerns created by the crowds, authorities in certain locations closed Build-A-Bear stores and, in other locations, we were forced to limit the line. Unfortunately, given these circumstances, we were unable to serve all of our Guests for the Pay Your Age Day event, as planned. In response, we distributed vouchers to Guests, who were present in lines, to be redeemed for a future purchase. We are now making vouchers available to our U.S. and Canada Build-A-Bear Bonus Club members, who log into their account by midnight CST on Sunday, July 15, 2018. Vouchers related to this event will be honored through August 31, 2018."

The give-a-away was in celebration of the company's new 'Count Your Candles' Birthday Experience.

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