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RYAN BRINGS HOLIDAY WISHES TO LIFE

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With the help of the Falcons Rookie Club, quarterback Matt Ryan and his wife, Sarah, surprised kids with a shopping spree Tuesday night.

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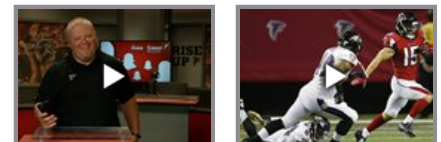
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With the holiday season in full swing, Atlanta Falcons quarterback **Matt Ryan** and his wife, Sarah, were joined by the Falcons Rookie Club, sponsored by UnitedHealthcare of

Georgia, as they surprised a group of children from **Action Ministries** with a \$150 shopping spree in Buford on Tuesday night.

There is no denying this time of year brings harried chaos into everyone's life, running around here and there in an attempt to finish holiday shopping or start it.

It's even wilder for Ryan and the 52 men who follow the fierce leader as they prepare for the final two games of the season, division games no less, on top of the season of giving. The chaos, however, isn't an excuse for the Ryan household.

"It's a fun night to brighten up everybody's holiday season," Ryan said. "It's always important to find time to impact the community and to affect some people who are a little bit less fortunate."

And time is just what he had.

Child after child came up to Ryan throughout the event. Some gave high-fives, while others rushed up and hugged him around his legs and waist. Others were a little star-struck, quickly warming up to the 6-foot-4 quarterback after some small talk and jokes.

Not once did Ryan turn his attention away because he was out of time. He was one hundred percent devoted to the kids, selflessly spreading cheer and joy into their lives.

Originally told they were going skydiving, the children were shocked and awed when Ryan told them about the shopping spree. Simultaneously, jaws dropped, squeals sounded from each table and cheers erupted amongst the group.

"It's so inspiring to know that their Christmas will be made by this," said John Moeller, president and CEO of Action Ministries. "They didn't have any expectation that there was going to be anything under the tree for them. There is going to be something as the result of this. But the experience of spending time with one of these really amazing athletes, heroes in their minds, will last a lifetime and go long beyond that toy that has inspired."

When Ryan took over the tradition of "Shop with a Pro" after former teammate and Falcons tight end Tony Gonzalez retired from the NFL, being known as a superhero wasn't the reason why, nor was it close. It was the pure enjoyment and positivity he got out of Gonzalez's events year after year, making it a "no brainer" to take over when asked.

As the night came to an end, shopping carts slowed due to the amount of items each one held. Walking out of the store, the children left with grins from ear-to-ear, an even bigger appreciation for their hometown heroes and presents they normally wouldn't have.

"It's a great combination of being able to bring some kids out that could use a fun night, and also people in this community being so kind to have them here and bringing out food," Ryan said. "It's a great event for these kids to enjoy something special around the holidays."

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