

Employees Donate Mountain of Gifts for Skid Row Kids

(Dec. 7, 2001) Santa Claus was there. And so was a mountain of toys, games, dolls, teddy bears, blankets, clothing and canned goods – thousands of holiday gifts to make the Skid Row Kids at the Fred Jordan Mission happy.

In fact, generous MTA employees donated far more than this year's Gift Giving Drive goal of 6,000 unwrapped gifts. Heaped at the entrance to Headquarters, three buses were required to haul them all to the Mission.

"We did very well this year," said Drive coordinator Bessie Rush-Johnson as she watched volunteers load the gifts onto waiting buses. "Considering the circumstances we're dealing with today, we did wonderfully."

On hand to receive the gifts and to thank employees for their generosity was Willie Jordan, widow of the late founder of the Fred Jordan Mission.

Backbone of the toy drive

"The MTA gives us a big part of the backbone of our toy drive," she said. "These toys will help give a wonderful Christmas to the children in the inner city."

Jordan said the gift drive was expanded this year to include canned goods to answer the need when thousands of Californians were laid off after the terrorist attacks.

"The food is literally flying off our shelves and is going out faster than it is coming in," she said. "Our demand for food is up at least 40 percent."

The gifts will be distributed at the Mission to families of the Skid Row Kids from 9 a.m. until 4 p.m., Sunday, Dec. 16. Employees and



Santa arrives at Patasouras Plaza, loads gifts onto buses and takes the bus, not a sled, to the Fred Jordan Mission.



Above, Willie Jordan and gift drive coordinator Bessie Rush-Johnson and, right, mission director Tom Jordan gets and HR DEO Naomi Nightingale help load more than 6,000 gifts. PHOTOS: BILL HEARD

their families are invited to help hand out gifts, but an employee's child must be at least 16 years old to participate.

Employees interested in participating in the gift distribution can contact Rush-Johnson at 922-2629 for information.

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