

## MTA Donates 6,000 Gifts to Inner City Children

By ADRIENNE FIGUEROA

(Dec. 12, 2003) This Christmas will mark another year that Willie Jordan, co-founder of the Fred Jordan Mission, has watched the economy slow and the number of needy families grow.

But, thanks to the generosity of MTA employees, 6,000 gifts will be distributed to inner city children, this year, during the Mission's annual holiday drive. It was MTA's eighth year to participate in the gift drive.

"MTA is one of our biggest and our best contributors," said Jordan. "To all the employees who gave these gifts, I say 'thank you,' not just for me, but for the thousands of children who will receive these toys."

Along with Santa and little visitors from the MTA Child Development Center, Deputy CEO John Catoe attended Friday's Gift Giving Drive to share a few words about the importance of the event.

"I know these gifts from MTA employees will bring joy to a lot of kids," said Catoe. "There will be a lot of kids smiling and laughing because of their donations."

Although this year's gift giving drive fell short of its goal, Bessie Rush-Johnson, MTA's Gift Giving Task Force coordinator, said the Mission still will have plenty of gifts for the children.

The Task Force received a variety of items, including glow-in-the-dark footballs, remote-controlled cars, coloring books, blankets and pajamas.

"It's just a multitude of gifts," said Rush-Johnson.

For the past three weeks, the Task Force has worked diligently to sort the items into categories according to age and gender.

"It's hard work because you're wrapping and bagging," said Rush-Johnson. "But it pays off."

PHOTOS BY BILL HEARD



Deputy CEO John Catoe and Willy Jordan of the Fred Jordan Mission thanked Gift Giving Coordinator Bessie Rush-Johnson, center, for her efforts during MTA's eighth holiday gift drive.



Even Santa got into the act with Willy Jordan to load MTA's 6,000 gifts onto waiting Metro Buses.

On Sunday, Dec. 21, Task Force members will visit the Mission, bearing gifts as well as money and check donations. The Mission expects to distribute bags of food and presents to about 12,000 people.

"I like that we're giving back to the community," Rush-Johnson said. "I do it because I know it's going to benefit the kids."

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Everyone had a big hug for Santa Claus.



Children from MTA's Child Development Center brought gifts for the Fred Jordan Mission kids.