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Children receive holiday gifts at annual "Toys for Watts" party.



Operators collect toys for underprivileged children

- Division 18 operators Louvenia Harris and Jimi Greene generate truckloads of toys for a community.

By RICH MORALLO

(Dec. 22, 2004) Louvenia Harris and Jimi Greene have something in common besides driving Metro buses out of Carson Division 18. They both collect toys for underprivileged children.

Every year during the holidays Louvenia, - just call her Lou - and Greene, also known as Jimi G., collect gifts, dolls, games and other knickknacks for neighborhood youngsters.

From September to December Lou and her four sisters and brothers-in-law donate their paychecks to buy playthings and presents for children. Lou's family also organizes the events where they hand out the presents - this year the December 11th Toys for Watts and the December 16th Annual Children Christmas Party on Imperial Highway.

"The party is in its 17th year," remarked Lou who operates Line 40 along Hawthorne Boulevard.



Lou Harris helps coordinate toy giveaway program in Watts.

Lou's family, led by her mother better known in the neighborhood as "Sweet Alice" started the toy collection event in 1988 as a way to pay back a good deed. "My mother was homeless and pregnant when she was 15 years old, and a woman took her in," narrated Lou.

"When my mom asked how she could pay her back, the lady simply told my mom to help someone else when the time comes," said Lou, who added that Sweet Alice, assisted by Lou and her sisters, eventually started the toy collection project in Watts.

While Lou's holiday project has been supported by Metro staff, most of her outreach is to local organizations, civic groups, chambers and businesses in the area. "Various motorcycle clubs have often supported this initiative," Lou revealed, saying that this year they received hundreds of toys including bicycles and Barbie Dolls.



On the job: Jimi Greene



Metro staff promotes Stevie Wonder's "House Full of Toys" program



Motorcycle club arrives to help with toy giveaway.

In 1996, Greene attended a December Stevie Wonder concert at the Wilshire Ebel Theatre. "I saw a couple of my friends collecting toys to help poor families," Greene said. "I work with a lot of people and I knew I could help," said the operator who is assigned to the new Metro Rapid Line 740.

From then on Greene has been coordinating toy collection at Metro South Bay among operators, mechanics, service attendants and other staff. Typically, Greene succeeds in generating truckloads of toys that are dropped off at KJLH radio station and at the Stevie Wonder concert at the Forum in Inglewood.

In his ninth year of working with the project called the Stevie Wonder "House Full of Toys," Greene says he is happy assisting kids in hospitals and homeless shelters. "Our own children may not have everything but they have more than these youngsters we are helping," said Greene who has three daughters of his own.

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