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## Santa Delivers 1,500 Metro Gifts to Skid Row Kids

By NED RACINE

(Dec. 12, 2006) Under tall palm trees and the watchful eye of Santa Claus, Metro presented approximately 1,500 gifts to the Fred Jordan Mission's Skid Row Kids, Monday, at the Plaza.

Donated by Metro employees, the toys and canned goods were loaded into a Metro Local articulated bus for a trip to the Mission, located near 4th and Alameda in Los Angeles, where they are sorted by age and gender.

"Your bus will take toys to parents who cannot afford these toys [for their children], and we're very grateful for that," said Willie Jordan,

widow of the late founder. "MTA, without question, always does the best toy drive."

CEO Roger Snoble noted Metro volunteers run the Gift Giving Drive. "They make this happen. And they make it happen on their own time."

Diversity and Economic Opportunity Department (DEOD) employees piled the gifts into the coach, watched by a herd of Child Development Center reindeers wearing paper antlers and sporting red noses. Rudolf would have been jealous.

**Metro Choir Provides Carols**

The Metro Choir, led by Renee Willis, sang Christmas carols while volunteers loaded the gifts.

Tashai Smith, serving her second year as lead coordinator of the Gift Giving Drive, said she became involved because of the Skid Row kids.

"To think that a lot of children would have no toys—it got my spirit going," Smith, a DEOD manager, said. This is the 11th year DEOD has organized Metro's Gift Giving Drive.

Smith noted that the Mission highly values Metro's donations. "They love the toys that Metro brings because they are such high quality. She praised the contributions from the RCC and divisions.

"There are a lot of children on Skid Row," said Linda Wright, DEO, Diversity & Economic Opportunity. "By far, Metro is the biggest toy gatherer for [Willie Jordan's] mission."

Approximately 10 DEOD volunteers will help distribute the toys and food to the 12,000 to 15,000 kids who will gather at the Mission on Sunday, Dec. 17, from 7:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. Each child will receive three gifts - a "special" toy and two smaller ones, Jordan explained.

"You will help change the life of a Skid Row child, if only for a few hours," Jordan told the assembled volunteers. "These children will always remember that someone loved them this Christmas."