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Willie Jordan, President of Fred Jordan Missions, welcomes the spirit of Christmas at the 12th Annual Metro Gift Giving Drive for needy families in Skid Row.



Photos by Luis Inzunza

Metro delivers holiday cheer at 12th annual Fred Jordan Missions toy drive for Skid Row kids

By GAYLE ANDERSON

(Dec. 11, 2007) Metro employees loaded more than a sleigh full of gifts and lots of cheer Monday morning onto a 60-foot Metro Liner. It was Metro's 12th annual gift-giving drive and the plaza full of presents was for the Fred Jordan Missions annual holiday toy drive and Christmas party for Skid Row Kids.

Following a brief program, the toys, food baskets, clothes and household goods such as blankets, were loaded into a Metro Local articulated bus for a trip to the Mission, located near 4th and Alameda in Los Angeles, where they will be distributed to needy families on Sunday, Dec. 16, at the annual Fred Jordan Missions Christmas party.

CEO Roger Snoble, wearing the traditional green sweatshirt with the Metro logo, proudly announced the collection of nearly 5,000 gifts for the city's needy families. "It is my honor to commend all of our employees from the bus side, the rail side, from all of Metro who so generously donated gifts to those in need during this holiday season."

Willie Jordan, president of the Fred Jordan Missions, was on hand with her two sons, Tom and Peter Jordan, both mission executives. She commended

Metro employees for demonstrating the true spirit of Christmas.

"I can't tell you what these gifts will mean to so many little children. Their mothers and fathers struggle to provide food on a day-to-day basis. And, there's just never any money left over for the extras. And this is the lovely season of the year when people of good will want to share. I want to thank you for being those very people for making a lot of kids happy," she said.

The *real* Santa

Snoble noted the tremendous effort put out by Santa Claus, who was busy handing out chocolate Hanukkah gelt to the visiting children from the Gateway Child Care Center.

"Just to let you know," said the CEO to the wide-eyed children festooned in paper antler caps and painted red noses, "he's the *real* Santa Claus."

Tashai Smith, serving her fourth year as lead coordinator of the Gift Giving Drive, took on the project after the retirement of Bessie Rush-Johnson, the founder and original coordinator of Metro's gift-giving partnership with the Fred Jordan Missions.

Rush-Johnson, who came to see the festive event, stood by as Smith gave the gift drive's very first promoter a nod of appreciation: "Bessie started this 12 years ago. And, we're still going strong!"

The beaming Rush-Johnson, pleased to see the effort alive and well, said the new team of coordinators led by Smith is succeeding beautifully. "They are doing a fabulous job," she said.

"We started planning in early October," said Smith, "which was the earliest we have started in the past three years." The coordinated effort included three open houses held simultaneously at the Gateway building, the Metro Support Services Center and the Rail Operations Center. "This was the first year that the Rail Operations Center and all four rail lines participated," she noted.

The gift that keeps on giving

"Watching to see all of the great toys and other items the employees bring in from bikes, skateboards, games, toy trucks, canned goods, backpacks, is the best part. And, every year, the quality gets better. The number of toys is great, but when you look at the quality of toys that come in – you truly see the generosity of the employees," said Smith.

As the Metro Choir sang Christmas carols and holiday tunes – *We bring you glad tidings and lots of good cheer – we wish you a merry Christmas and a happy New Year!* – volunteers disguised as Metro elves in green sweatshirts helped Santa Claus load the waiting Metro Liner sleigh.



Santa Claus and 'head elf' CEO Roger Snoble.



The Metro Gift-Giving Drive's first promotor, Bessie Rush-Johnson, meets the Jordans, from left, son Tom, mother Willie and son Peter.



Lead coordinator Tashai Smith leads the program with a word of thanks to the generous gift givers of Metro.



Metro Choir collaborates with children from the Gateway Child Care Center for a round of holiday songs.

More Metro volunteers will help distribute the toys and food to the 12,000 to 15,000 families who will gather at the decked-out warehouse facility on Sunday from 7:30 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Willie Jordan’s closing remarks put it all in perspective. “And after all the trees are dead, after we’ve all eaten too much and after the decorations are put away and, maybe, after the toys are broken, these children will remember one thing. They’ll remember that somebody loves them this Christmas. Thank you for being those loving people to so many thousands of children. Today, we celebrate joy and I celebrate you.”

It takes an entire transportation agency ...



Elves



Santa's Support Units

- | | |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Tashai R. Smith, Lead Metro Toy Drive Coordinator• Jim Montoya, MSSC and Division Coordinator• Amador Silva, ROC and Rail Yards• Jeanne Kinsel, Open House Coordinator• Linda Perryman, Media Relations Coordinator• Barbara Thomasson, Toy Collection Coordinator | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Administrative Services Strategic Business Unit• Communications Strategic Business Unit• Operations Special Events• Metro Choir• Gateway Child Care Center• Employee volunteers |
|---|--|

