

It's Time Again for Toy and Joy

By Scott Laird

The Vernonia Volunteer Firefighters are starting their annual "Toy and Joy" campaign and are once again looking for families to assist during the holiday season. They are also looking for contributions from the community to help make the season joyful for Vernonia families.

"This is a great program," said Dan Owens who is continuing in his role as chairperson as he has for the last three years. "This project is run by a committee. It's a lot of work, but it's also a lot of fun."

Toy and Joy helps out families that apply with presents for children under age 14. Applications are available at the Vernonia Fire Station, Vernonia Cares, and Head Start. There is a mailbox in front of the Vernonia Fire station where applications can be dropped off. Children can drop off letters to Santa Claus as well. Applications are confidential and there is no verification process done. "I'm the only one that sees the applications," said chairperson Owens. "If they are asking, then we assume they need it." Deadline for applications is December 15.

"Last year we helped 45 families and 135 children," said Owens. "Each year the project seems to grow just a little."

"We are also looking for the community to be involved," said Owens. "We have reserves of toys and funds. But our reserves are getting low. We need to replenish our supply and are especially in

need of toys for infants to three-year-olds, and for young adults ages twelve to fourteen. We will have barrels placed around town at Sentry Market, City Hall, Napa Auto Parts, Wauna Credit Union, and the Mini Mart to collect toys. We can also accept monetary donations, which are very helpful because then we can shop and try to meet special requests for items."

Once all the toys are collected and purchased, then the firefighters get together and wrap them. "Wrapping is an all day event," said Owens. "The campaign is not the same from year to year. We get new ideas and always have to work within a budget."

"We also create what we call "Mom and Dad Bags" that include shampoo, toothpaste, body wash and other personal care items," said Owens. "We got a great donation from Vernonia Dental this year- they are contributing tooth brushes and toothpaste for all our families."

Santa will deliver the presents to the families right before Christmas Eve. And once again, thanks to the Vernonia Volunteer Firefighters, there will be toys and joy this holiday season in Vernonia.



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