



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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TEAM KICKS OFF VALLEY TOY DRIVE TODAY

DERBY, Conn. – TEAM, Inc. kicked off its annual toy drive today to collect new toys for children in need this holiday season.

The toy drive was launched at John J. Sullivan’s restaurant in Ansonia, where more than 70 volunteers who help collect and distribute toys, and organize the TEAM “toy store” had breakfast before picking up toy drop-off boxes and posters.

The breakfast was sponsored by Webster Bank and John J. Sullivan’s restaurant. Even the wait staff volunteered to work the breakfast. In all, 135 volunteers are expected to participate in the toy drive this year.

TEAM Toys 4 Kids (formerly known as Valley Toys for Tots), the largest holiday toy drive in the region, collects toys for children from infancy to 12 years old who live in Ansonia, Beacon Falls, Bethany, Derby, Oxford, Seymour, Shelton, Orange and Woodbridge. TEAM provided 5,740 toys to 1,435 children and 445 toys to five organizations last year.

At the breakfast this morning, Dr. Bruce Sofferman, a dentist with offices in Derby and Oxford, who helped found the toy drive as a small effort in the Valley, applauded TEAM’s efforts.

“It has grown to become a very well run, beautiful event,” Sofferman said. “TEAM has run it with class.”

The event is almost entirely run by volunteers, with support from TEAM staff, said Diane Stroman, TEAM’s vice president of Development. Last year, 135 volunteers gave a total of 1,100 hours to TEAM Toys 4 Kids.

“This breakfast acknowledges the incredibly dedicated corps of 135 volunteers who help collect and distribute toys, the 117 local businesses who serve as donation drop-off sites and the many companies and civic groups that host their own drives for us,” Stroman said, also acknowledging the city of Ansonia for donating the use of space where the TEAM “toy store” will be held.

This year, the greatest need is for gifts for children 10 to 12 years old. Some recommended donations include: skateboards, snowboards and snow tubs, cameras, curling irons/flat irons/blow dryers, computer games, soccer balls and baseballs, MP3 players, sports posters and watches. Gift cards, at a \$5 minimum, to Blockbuster, Seymour Cinema 12, iTunes, Target and Amazon.com, among others, are also suggested. For a full list of suggestions (list attached), please visit the TEAM website at www.teaminc.org.

Once collected, toys from the drive are distributed to eligible parents at the TEAM “toy store” at 153 Main St., Ansonia, on Dec. 16, 19, 20 and 21. Parents must request toys in advance by signing up at the TEAM offices, 30 Elizabeth St., Derby, from now through Dec. 14. Parents are given an exact date and time to “shop” for their toys.

Starting Nov. 10, 117 drop-off sites will accept toy donations until Dec. 13. However, if toys are donated after Dec. 13, TEAM will accept them. For a list of drop-off sites (list attached), visit the TEAM website at www.teaminc.org.

TEAM also announced several upcoming events to benefit the TEAM Toys 4 Kids drive:

- **Nov. 27:** The seventh annual Christmas Breakfast sponsored by Thomas and Diane Baklik is the Sunday after Thanksgiving, Nov. 27, at the Baklik home, 19 Chucta Road, Seymour. The Bakliks, who own the

Yankee Clipper barber shop, offer a full breakfast, entertainment and a visit from Santa Claus in exchange for an unwrapped new toy for TEAM Toys 4 Kids.

- **Dec. 3:** Echo Hose Ambulance and Pine Rock Park Fire Co. 4 will sponsor “Story Time with Santa,” 9:30 a.m. to noon, Saturday, Dec. 3, at the Huntington Library inside the Shelton Community Center, 41 Church St., Shelton. Children will be treated to free hot chocolate, cookies and photos with Santa. Special guests will read children’s stories. Attendees are asked to bring a new unwrapped toy valued at \$10. Cash donations also will be accepted and will go toward buying toys for TEAM Toys 4 Kids.
- **Dec. 10:** The Seymour Police Department will hold its annual “Fill the Police Cruiser” for donors to fill a police car with new unwrapped toys from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. on Saturday, Dec. 10, at Super Stop & Shop, 15 Franklin St., Seymour.
- **Dec. 11:** Marcucio Gardens, run by the Marcucio family, will hold a free holiday party at the nursery, 480 New Haven Ave., Derby, from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., Sunday, Dec. 11. Children will have photos taken with Santa and Mrs. Claus, will paint their own ornaments, which they can take home; and will be treated to hot chocolate, all while being serenaded by a youth string orchestra. Families are asked to bring a new unwrapped toy for TEAM Toys 4 Kids.

To volunteer to hold a special event, host a drop-off site or work at the TEAM “toy store,” please call Trish Wigglesworth at TEAM at 203 736-5420 x 221.

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NOT FOR PUBLICATION: If you want to interview a volunteer or the host of a toy drive to benefit TEAM Toys 4 Kids, please call Suzan Bibisi at TEAM at 203 736 5425 x 209. We will get you an interview with someone in your circulation area.

TEAM Inc. is a private, 501c (3) non-profit corporation whose mission is to connect individuals and families with solutions that lead to well-being, self-sufficiency and full participation in the community. It aims to achieve its mission by conducting activities that address the needs of economically disadvantaged individuals and families including resource mobilization, education, advocacy and service delivery. TEAM programs serve the communities of Ansonia, Beacon Falls, Bethany, Derby, Milford, Orange, Oxford, Shelton, Seymour and Woodbridge.