

## Marine Corps "Toys for Tots" Program Brings Holiday Cheer to North Jersey

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Rep. Rothman, UPS highlight one way you can help kids in need this year.

(Teaneck, NJ)—Today, Congressman Steve Rothman (D-NJ) and United Parcel Service (UPS) joined forces to highlight the successful Toys for Tots program of the United States Marine Corps (USMC) and Marine Corps Reserve. Through Toys for Tots, Marines partner with local sponsors such as The UPS Store to collect toys to distribute to families in need throughout the holiday season. Toys are collected for children of all ages—from babies and toddlers to pre-teens and early-teenagers. This year marks the 60th anniversary of the Toys for Tots Program.

"U.S. Marines already give so much to our country and I applaud their work each year to also bring holiday cheer to children in Northern New Jersey. No child needs a teddy bear to survive, but every child should know they have not been forgotten. When entire communities come together to help others, we send a message of love and hope to young people—a message that their country cares about them," said Rothman.

"For sixty years, Toys for Tots has brought smiles to the faces of children all across New Jersey. We might not be able to eliminate poverty through this campaign, but maybe we can lessen its pain and increase awareness at the same time. I look at each toy I deliver as an opportunity to improve a child's outlook on life and increase his or her self-esteem," said USMC 1st Sgt. William E. Meisinger, stationed at the Picatinny Arsenal and a coordinator of the 2007 Marine Corps Toys for Tots program in Bergen, Essex, Morris, Passaic, Sussex, Union, and Warren Counties.

All toys are accepted and welcome. However, the Bergen County Toys for Tots Foundation notes that big kids are among the least bought for each year. Possible gifts for young people at the top of the age range are age-appropriate jewelry and make-up, back packs, sports equipment, books, wrist watches, and AM/FM radios. A list of toy suggestions by age group is available online at: [http://bergencountytoysfortots.com/toy\\_suggestions.html](http://bergencountytoysfortots.com/toy_suggestions.html).

In addition to collecting toys, UPS sites throughout Northern New Jersey will sell commemorative Toys for Tots donation cards for \$1 each, with 100 percent of the proceeds benefiting Toys for Tots campaigns in communities where the funds are raised. This is the third year that UPS has been a national Toys for Tots sponsor. Over the past two years, the nationwide chain has raised more than \$1 million for The Marine Toys for Tots Foundation.

"UPS is committed to the communities we serve and at this special time of year we always come through," said Rich Merullo, UPS Vice President of Operations for the Northeast Region.

Poverty is real in Northern New Jersey. In Bergen County alone, nearly 30,000 families survive on less than \$35,000 a year, with more than half of those families living on less than \$25,000 a year in income. Further, nearly half of households in Bergen spend more than 30% of their income on rent alone. "Add to that the rising costs of gas, health care, and food, and you start to see how difficult it can be to make ends meet, let alone give a child a gift to call her own during the holidays," said Rothman.

U.S. Marines have operated Toys for Tots in New Jersey since 1947. The Marine Toys for Tots program is described as

an official activity of the U.S. Marine Corps and an official mission of the Marine Corps Reserve on the New Jersey Toy for Tots Web site at: [www.njtoysfortots.org](http://www.njtoysfortots.org) .

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