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You don't have to see the whole staircase, just take the first step.
~ Martin Luther King

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Over 20,000 toys were distributed through Northwest Michigan Toys for Tots

By Mike Kent

Traverse City, Mich.— December 24, 2025 - An estimated 5,700 children in the Traverse City region will share the joy of new toys tomorrow thanks to the success of the northwest Michigan Toys for Tots campaign.

While the final numbers will not be fully known for several days, campaign organizers estimate they collected and distributed over 20,00 toys this year. Organizers say they believe they met the needs of more than a dozen human service agencies that distribute the toys to families in need. The northwest Michigan campaign covers Grand Traverse, Antrim, Benzie, Leelanau, and Kalkaska Counties. Other Toys for Tots campaigns operate throughout northern Michigan.

“This was a challenging year,” said campaign coordinator Maggie Kent. “Toy requests were up from previous years. But thanks to the tremendous generosity of this community, thousands of toys will be in the grateful hands of kids this Christmas. It would never have happened if not for those who took toys to our drop-off locations and a variety of events.”

Kent also praised the long list of sponsors who supported the campaign with cash donations or in-kind gifts.

The toy donations were augmented by 245 bikes donated through Piper’s Project This Girl Can, and Bikes for Tikes. Corporate cash donations were given by Meijer, Fox Grand Traverse, Great Wolf Lodge, Leelanau Sands and Turtle Creek Casinos, the Les and Anne Biederman Foundation, Trout Town, and Moose and Stella’s restaurants in Kalkaska. An additional \$10,000 gift was received from an anonymous donor.

“This is a campaign built around faith,” said Kent. “None of us sees the final results. As it should be, it’s the parents who experience the joy when their child opens a present on Christmas morning. All we can do is have a warm feeling because we know that moment will be special.”

Local corporate sponsors include Meijer, Fox Grand Traverse, Serra of Traverse City, Great Wolf Lodge, Two Men and A Truck, Up North Live News, Midwestern Broadcasting, Black Diamond Broadcasting, Blarney Stone Broadcasting, Traverse City Record-Eagle, Leelanau Sands Casino, Turtle Creek Casino, The Les & Anne Biederman Foundation, Jen Tees, A. Papano’s Pizza, Bay Area Transportation Authority, Fast Signs, US Coast Guard, Menards, Republic Services, Service Masters, Poolside, Home Depot, Grand Traverse Industries, Lowe’s, Trout Town Tavern & Eatery, Moose & Stella’s Café, Jimmy Johns, and Traverse City Tourism.

Now in its 78th year, the toy drive is part of a national campaign initiated by the Marine Corps Reserves. It is the largest toy collection program in the country, with 800 campaigns in all 50 states. More information is available at <http://www.toysfortots.org>



Above: Toys for Tots display at Odawa casino
Below: Two Men and a Truck help transport bicycles for Piper's Project This Girl Can.

