

News & Community

Sea Tow of SML donates toys to Lake Christian Ministries 'A Child's Christmas'

Jeff Reid

Smith Mountain Eagle contributor

With the help of customers at local Dollar General Stores, the anglers of the Striper Mafia Tournament Series, Sea Tow captains, members, and friends, and America's Boating Club, Sea Tow turned in another large haul of toys and other donations to Lake Christian Ministries' "A Child's Christmas" this year.

The Dollar General Store managers also delivered toys for the program in August when they held their corporate annual meeting at the W. E. Skelton 4-H Educational Conference Center.

In all, 4,150 toys, \$50 in gift cards and \$345 in cash were donated to Lake Christian Ministries.

Nancy and Rick Ellett of Sea Tow of SML, have been collecting toys for Lake Christian Ministries since 2009. For the past several years, Sea Tow has been spending four days in December outside four different Dollar General Store locations around the Lake with a small boat asking customers to bring or buy toys to fill the boat by the end of the day.

"Sea Tow would like to thank everyone who gave toys, and the local Dollar General Stores for allowing them to set up outside their stores to collect toys," said Sea Tow captain and co-owner Nancy Ellett. "We could not do it without everyone's support."

"Due to the economy this year and rising prices, it sometimes comes down to parents making a choice between paying the monthly bills and feeding their family versus purchasing toys for their children."

This toy drive is very important to us, Ellett said. "We want every child to have presents under their tree," she said. "We do not buy presents for each other; this is our Christmas joy."

According to "A Child's Christmas" program coordinator Dianna Weiner, who along with a large group of volun-



Volunteer Laura Cox and daughters Savannah, 11, and Ellie, 4, help process toys donated by Sea Tow and other donors on Monday morning at Bethlehem United Methodist Church in Moneta. The toys will be sorted and then placed in bags by volunteers for families to pick up. Credit: Jeff Reid

teers, helped process Sea Tow's hefty donation at Bethlehem United Methodist Church on Monday morning, "the need is incredible" this year.

Weiner said that during the Oct. 2-Nov. 29 registration period, 680 children were signed up, a significant increase from last year. She added that a large number are teenagers this year.

"The response has been huge this year," she said. "We had a total of 457 last year...I haven't seen anything like it."

She said that once all the LCM orders are filled, the remaining toys will be donated to We Care of Franklin County.



Anne Loiselle of Sea Tow SML (left) and volunteer Jan Wells pass out toys from a truck Monday morning at Bethlehem United Methodist Church in Moneta. Sea Tow of SML rented the truck to transport 4,150 toys from a storage facility to the church. The toys will be distributed by Lake Christian Ministries' "A Child's Christmas" program. Credit: Jeff Reid

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