

COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS COLLECT CHRISTMAS TOYS FOR NEEDY CHILDREN

SEVERAL ORGANIZATIONS IN Columbus are collecting toys for area needy children in order to ensure that children in Columbus have a special Christmas.

Many of the organizations take gift donations until a few days before Christmas.

Earth Temple, a non-denominational religious and social service organization, will host its annual Christmas Eve toy giveaway for underprivileged youth on Tuesday, Dec. 24, from 10 a.m.

day out of the year to give something back. It doesn't take a lot of effort, it just takes a little of the Christmas spirit."

For more information about Earth Temple's toy giveaway and to donate toys, contact Hodge at 231-5595, or send donations to: P.O. Box 272100, Columbus, Ohio 43227.

Firefighters 4 Kids, formerly "Firefighters Toys for Tots," will be accepting toys through December 23. Fireman Bill Russell,

toys must apply in person at their neighborhood community service center. Citizens may contact FirstLink at 221-2255 to determine the location of the community services center in their area.

Applicants must present photo identification, proof of income and identification for each household member when signing up for toys.

Franklin County Children Services Holiday Wish Program fulfills holiday wish lists for over



OLD SAINT NICK - CMACAO youngsters had a chance to visit with Santa Claus during the recent "Firefighters 4 Kids" kick-off celebration. (PHOTO By TARA M. STUBBS)

to 2 p.m. at First A.M.E. Zion Church, Bryden Road and S. 18th Street. There will be toys available for over 1,000 children, including coloring books and bookmarks. Families are encouraged to bring

the director of the program, said firefighters plan on giving toys to over 10,000 needy children.

"We're a worthy cause because 95 percent of the money we collect goes back into buying toys,"

5,000 abused, neglected and troubled children.

It is one of the few holiday programs that allows children to ask for specific gifts.

Children ages 11 and under may wish for gifts worth \$30. Youth ages 12 and older may ask for a gift certificate worth \$40.

Children under the care of FCCS may live in their homes, with their parents, with foster parents or other residential care.

For more information about Christmas call the FCCS Holiday Workshop at 275-2525.

For the 49th consecutive year, the Marine Corps Reserve will be playing Santa to area youngsters.

Last year the Marine Reserves collected toys for more than 2,000 children. This year they hope to surpass that total.

"Nothing compares to watching a child's face light up when handing them a new toy on Christmas morning. The Marines are proud to be a part of this special program," said local Marine coordinator Sgt. Frederic Magare.

The Marine Corps Reserve is working in conjunction with the Kroger Company, WTTE-TV 28, the City of Gahanna, Coca-Cola, McDonald's and the Marine Corps League. Major sponsors for this year's program are Shell Ohio Inc., HMA Street Rods and AMC Theaters.

For more information about the Marines' Toys for Tots program call Sgt. Frederic Magare at 235-8664.



TOYS, TOYS, TOYS - Several Columbus area agencies are collecting toys for needy children. This display was collected by Firefighters 4 Kids. (PHOTO By TARA M. STUBBS)

their Aid to Families with Dependent Children identification cards to qualify for the free toys.

"This being our sixth year, we'd like to make it our best year yet and encourage others to do the same," said Anthony Hodge, founder of Earth Temple. "Just think of how great of a community we'd have if everyone took a

Russell said. "This is a good program. It helps a lot of kids."

Firechief H.J. Dutko is proud of the firefighter toy drive. "Each year it gets bigger and bigger. The firefighters love the kids," Dukto said.

Anyone wishing to donate toys may do so at any Columbus fire station. Families requesting



WORTH THE EFFORT - The Firefighters 4 Kids toy drive kicked off recently in Columbus. Santa, above, appeared at the kick-off where he greeted children from CMACAO's Head Start Program. Santa, who had parked his sleigh on top of the fire house, made a grand entrance at the event perched atop a fire engine. (PHOTO By TARA M. STUBBS)

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