

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Over 6,600 Toys Delivered To USVI Children By Marine Toys For Tots Foundation, Hotel And Tourism Associations And Partner Organizations

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It was a holiday miracle for children in the U.S. Virgin Islands as the USVI Hotel & Tourism Association and St. Croix Hotel & Tourism Association worked alongside the Puerto Rico branch of the Marine Toys for Tots Foundation, Hasbro, VI-R3 and Perfect Heart to ship and distribute over 6,600 toys to USVI children in nearly 20 housing communities.

On Dec. 26 and Dec. 27, Toys for Tots Puerto Rico coordinator Sgt. Kevin Shepherd, Sgt. Dillon Bahr and SSgt. Stephen Baker of unit Det 1, LS Co, CLR-45, USVIHTA

members and additional volunteers and partner organizations distributed 2,500 toys to children on St. Croix, and distributed an additional 2,500 to children on St. Thomas on Dec. 28. Perfect Heart, VI-R3 and other local organizations ensured children on St. John also received toys. Plans for the additional toys to be taken to the British Virgin Islands are currently underway.

“We are truly humbled by this considerable contribution as well as the generosity of the Marine Toys for Tots Foundation and Hasbro,” said USVIHTA President Lisa Hamilton. “We have never had so many toys donated, and it amounted to a nice Christmas for Virgin Islands children. We are thrilled to work with these amazing organizations.”

The Marine Toys for Tots Foundation partners with the St. Croix Hotel & Tourism Association and organizations on St. Thomas annually to provide toys to children in need, generally donating between 300 and 400 toys. Additionally, USVIHTA traditionally hosts an annual holiday party where members donate gifts that are then distributed to children in the Boys & Girls Club of the Virgin Islands. In light of the September storms, funds were not available for these annual events.

On Dec. 22, the Marine Toys for Tots Foundation proposed a holiday miracle – the foundation and partner Hasbro wished to donate over 6,600 toys to children in the USVI who were impacted by Hurricanes Irma and Maria. The association jumped into action, organizing hotel stays and transportation for marines visiting from Puerto Rico, as well as contacting the Virgin Islands Housing Authority to inquire about distributing toys to children in housing communities.

“It has been a pleasure returning to the islands and working in collaboration with so many great people. The marines and I just wanted to do our part to help bring the joy of Christmas to the Caribbean, especially after the devastation from Irma and Maria,” said Shepherd

The organizations thanked their members, partner organizations and other charitable organizations that made the events possible, including: the Marine Toys for Tots Foundation and Hasbro; association members Seaborne Airlines; Divi Carina Bay Resort & Casino; Centerline Car Rentals; Windward Passage Hotel; Bolongo Bay Beach Resort and Scott Nieboer for the use of their flatbed and assistance with transportation; Yacht Haven Grande; Budget Rent a Car; the V.I. Housing Authority and employees Zelda Williams, Lydia Pelle and George Silcott for coordinating the housing community visits; and partner organizations VI-R3 and Perfect Heart for assistance with transportation, distribution and storage of toys.