

The Virgin Islands Consortium

More Than \$79,000 in Toys Distributed to Local Children by Marine Toys for Tots and Hotel & Tourism Associations

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Marines distribute holiday gifts to children across the territory. By. USVI Hotel & Tourism Association

The USVI Hotel & Tourism Association and St. Croix Hotel & Tourism Association along with the Puerto Rico branch of the Marine Toys for Tots Foundation distributed more \$79,000 in toys to nearly 2,500 children in housing communities on St. Croix Dec. 7 and St. Thomas Dec. 8.

“It’s truly a pleasure to partner with the Marine Toys for Tots Foundation each year to bring joy to children for the holidays,” said USVIHTA President Lisa Hamilton, according to a release issued early Saturday. “We’re overwhelmed by the generosity of all those who came together to make this time of year special for families throughout the territory.”

More than \$19,000 in toys were purchased from local Kmart stores with an additional \$60,000 worth of toys shipped into the territory by the marines, according to the release. Marines and volunteers visited ten housing communities on St. Croix reaching 899 children, and six housing communities on St. Thomas reaching 858 children. Toys were also distributed to an additional 711 children through ten other local organizations.

Each holiday season, the Marine Toys for Tots Foundation partners with USVIHTA and STXHTA to provide toys for children in the territory. Additionally, USVIHTA raises funds through its annual holiday party to provide gifts for the Boys & Girls Club of St. Thomas. STXHTA likewise hosts its annual Holiday Hope event where funds are raised to support CASA of the Virgin Islands, Caribbean Centers for Boys & Girls of the Virgin Islands and the association’s scholarship. Community outreach and youth support are central to the missions of both USVIHTA and STXHTA, the release said.

The associations thanked the assisting marines, including: Toys for Tots Coordinator Staff Sgt. Angel Melendez, Toys for Tots Assistant Coordinator Sgt. Joanna Milan, Cpl. Manuel Kidd Ramos, Sgt. Juan Castro Salazar, LCpl. Jean Hernandez Barreiro, Jorge Afanador Garcia, Cpl. Orlando Ramos Rodriguez and LCpl. Javier Omar Reyes.

They also thanked association members and partner organizations that made the Toys for Tots event possible, including: the Marine Toys for Tots Foundation; association members; Seaborne Airlines for providing flights between Puerto Rico, St. Croix and St. Thomas; Renaissance St. Croix Carambola Beach Resort & Spa and Bolongo Bay Beach Resort for providing hotel stays; Budget Rent-A-Car and Olympic Rent-A-Car for providing rental vehicles; Caribbean Packaging and The Reef Golf Course for providing large trucks to transport the toys; Cane Bay Dive Shop and Bolongo Bay Beach Resort for toy pick up at the dock; Paradise Freight for storing toys on St. Croix; and both the USVI Hotel & Tourism Association and St. Croix Hotel & Tourism Association for tickets from Puerto Rico to St. Croix.