



Delores Westfall -middle
Rick Weigand - right



Donna Fultz - center



George & Carolyn Thomas
Bernie Hiskey - center

Did you know that the members of the Brandon PER Association are actually Christmas Elf's?

The Brandon Lodge #2383's PER Association has chaired the Walgreen Toy Drive for 3 years for our lodge; ever since the lodge was fortunate enough to be invited to be part of the Walgreens Toy Drive. Nine members of the Brandon PER Association volunteer each year to pick up the bags of toys from the thirteen local Walgreen stores assigned to the Brandon Lodge, (PER's Rick Weigand, Nickie Wells, George Thomas, Larry Oliver, Bernie Hiskey, Delores Westfall, Mary Lou Scribner, George Scribner/PDDGER, Sharon Hammersla/SWC DVP). Like true Santa's helpers, they picked up toys December 16th and then on Thursday, December 17th all toys were gathered at the lodge, sorted by toy type and age groups, and then the real fun began!

The Lodge invited Therapist Paula Tarver as the first to pick out toys. Our Therapists will use the toys during children's therapy and also as gifts for the children and their siblings. Paula was unable to actually attend, so Mary Lou Scribner worked with her via cell phone and videos and identified appropriate toys, filling six humongous bags full of toys.

The lodge invited teachers from three of the local title one schools to shop through the toys (Yates Elementary, Mango Elementary and Palm River Elementary). The teachers were thrilled for this opportunity to find toys for the children of their schools. If not for this toy drive these teachers would be purchasing these toys from their own pockets. Because of this wonderful Walgreens Toy Drive, the teachers are able to shop taking home bags of toys but there was no "bill" to be paid! Without this toy drive, many of these children would not receive any Christmas toys. What a blessing this event is to our schools, children, teachers and community.

Bags of toys were donated to "Hope for Her" which is a safe place where women experiencing crisis and trauma find the strength, skills and support they need to rebuild their lives. PER Rick Weigand and PER Delores Westfall delivered bags of toys to "The Springs" which is a haven for battered women and their children. Both organizations were overwhelmed with gratitude. These toys will bring Christmas cheer and will also be used during the year to help children when they arrive and need something to bring them some joy and help them through a traumatic experience.

Even through the COVID crisis, the toy drive was a huge success. The lodge gathered and distributed 844 toys with a value of over \$5,500. Brandon Lodge is thankful to be part of this annual event and send a BIG thank you to Dan and Casey Masi for the above and beyond work they have done in orchestrating this partnership with Walgreens, heading it each year and overseeing the project. It's a huge endeavor that they do as a labor of love. And what a fantastic way for Elkdome to be active and visible in our local communities. The Brandon Lodge is grateful to be included and look forward to an even bigger toy drive next year and years to come!

