

The Intelligencer. Wheeling News-Register

Police, United Way Team Up To Deliver Smiles at WVU Medicine Wheeling Hospital

Items Collected By Operation Toy Lift Making A Difference



photo by: Eric Ayres

Boxloads of items from Operation Toy Lift made their way to WVU Medicine Wheeling Hospital on Wednesday, when police officers got a chance to give early gifts to young patients. From left are Wheeling PD's Detective Brandon Hoen, Deputy Chiefs Terry Walls and Josh Sanders; Jess Moore, associate vice president of foundation and community Relations and Jessica Thompson, NICU/Pediatrics Nurse Manager at WVU Medicine Wheeling Hospital; Maddi Seavy, associate director of the United Way of the Upper Ohio Valley and WPD Officer Patrick Ryan and Victim Advocate Coordinator Samantha Baker.

A little holiday cheer made its way to WVU Medicine Wheeling Hospital on Wednesday, when members of the Wheeling Police Department and the United Way of the Upper Ohio Valley distributed some of the items collected during a very successful Operation Toy Lift earlier this month.



Many children visiting the hospital on Wednesday received a toy directly from an officer as part of the popular annual program. Nearly 20 huge boxes of toys were collected during the annual holiday drive this year, and two of those massive boxes filled with a heaping holiday bounty were delivered to the hospital on Wednesday.

“It means a lot — especially this year,” said Maddi Seavy, associate director of the United Way of the Upper Ohio Valley. “I think it’s been one of the harder years for a lot of families — a lot of our neighbors and people that we care about. So it really means a lot to be able to just provide some of that support and to be thankful for everything you do have.”

Operation Toy Lift is conducted each December through an effort by the Wheeling Police Department, Belmont County Sheriff’s Office and other community partners. A toy drive outside the Ohio Valley Mall features a who’s who of community leaders lifted high into the air on the boom of a bucket truck encouraging the public to get involved by donating items.

After the toys are collected, the United Way makes them available to its partner agencies by setting up a store in one of the vacant spaces at the mall.

“We let agencies and nonprofits come shop for their clients,” Seavy said.

And of course, some of the toys are hand-delivered to young patients in the hospital. The stock of toys are kept on hand to distribute to children visiting the hospital in the coming days and throughout the year.

“This is really important for all kids and parents when they come through the hospital doors,” said Jessica Moore, associate vice president of Foundation and Community Relations at WVU Medicine Wheeling Hospital. “They can be a little bit nervous, and getting greeted by the Wheeling PD with stuffed animals and toys for kids is something that’s really beautiful.”

On Wednesday, a fleet of police officers — armed with a trove of stuffed animals and various toys in hand — brought smiles to the faces of children in the inpatient and outpatient units of WVU Medicine Wheeling Hospital.

The stash of toys will be given to young patients visiting the hospital through Christmas, and will be available for patients throughout the year until those boxes of toys are depleted and replenished next year when Operation Toy Lift takes place again.

“Today is an amazing day for the Wheeling Police Department,” said Terry Walls, Wheeling deputy police chief. “We’re just so grateful to be part of that and to be able to give back to the children who are coming into the hospital. They may have a little anxiety or may be sick, and this just helps give them a little bit of comfort while they’re here getting treated.”

A new member to the Wheeling PD, Walls broke the ice and paid his dues during the Operation Toy Lift event at the mall, going up in the bucket for a 30-minute shift through some frigid temperatures.

“It’s an amazing cause,” Walls said. “I enjoyed every minute of it. To see the members of our community come in and donate so many toys for the children is just really heartfelt and meaningful for the department.”

Events like these not only help brighten the holidays for some area children, they also help build relationships between partner agencies, the police department and members of the community.

“We want to help spread the word about crime prevention, we want people to know our police officers and to make Wheeling a safer place,” Walls said.

For more information about Operation Toy Lift, visit www.unitedwayuov.org.

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