

## **TOYS FOR TOTS**

Toys for Tots' initial objective, which remains the hallmark of the program today, is to *'bring the joy of Christmas to needy children'*. Its goal is to deliver a message of hope that will build self-esteem and motivate children to grow into responsible, productive, patriotic citizens and community leaders.

Toys for Tots began in 1947 when Major Bill Hendricks, USMCR and a group of Marine Reservists in Los Angeles collected and distributed 5,000 toys to needy children. The program was so successful, it was expanded nationwide wherever a Marine Corps Reserve Unit existed, the following year.

In 1993, the Peel Regional Police Service initiated the endeavour in Canada; The Halton Regional Police Service began its own similar Toys for Tots program in 2000.

The official kick-off for the 2008 campaign was held on Friday, November 7, 2008 at Canadian Tire (Trafalgar Road and Dundas Street). Chief Gary Crowell was joined by Walter Gretzky, and representatives from the Oakville Salvation Army, Canadian Tire and Halton Honda.

Members of the public were invited to donate cash, Canadian Tire money and/or new, unwrapped toys at any Canadian Tire location in Halton Region between November 15, 2008 and December 21, 2008.

Off-duty uniform and civilian employees of the Halton Regional Police Service gave of their time each weekend during the campaign to collect cash, Canadian Tire money, and new, unwrapped toys to ensure the program's continued success.

In addition to Halton Regional Police Service employees donating their time for this worthwhile cause, many community partnerships were forged with many stakeholders in the Halton Region, including, sports organizations, local businesses and schools.

The Salvation Army identified families experiencing difficulty and distributed toys purchased and/or collected to them. The toys collected in each Halton community were distributed to these identified families in the same communities.

In 2007, the Halton Regional Police Service Toys for Tots campaign raised more than \$54,000. In 2008, the Toys for Tots campaign experienced its greatest success, in a difficult year for many Halton families. Despite the

significant downturn in the economy, Halton citizens dug down deep and donated over \$81,000 in toys and cash, spreading joy to over 1350 Halton families. Although 2009 appears to paint a bit rosier economic picture, its is anticipated that the demand for toys will be just as great as it ever was and the hope is that Halton citizens will once again show their true community spirit and help their fellow Halton families.

The 2009 Toys for Tots campaign is expected to kick-off on Friday, November 6, 2009 and expected to run from Saturday, November 14, 2009 to Sunday, December 20, 2009.