

VAU.S. Department
of Veterans Affairs

News Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Giving Tree Provides Gifts for Veteran Families in Need

PROVIDENCE, R.I. – The Providence VA Medical Center distributed an estimated \$60,000 worth of toys, bikes and games provided by VA employees, volunteers, Veterans and other donors to Veteran families in need during the week of Dec. 14, 2016.

“What better way to serve Veterans than helping to bring them the joy of happy children during the holidays?” asked Donna Russillo, chief of the Voluntary Service at the Providence VAMC, who coordinated the toy drive.

The drive began with a “Giving Tree” placed in the medical center’s 5th floor, e-wing elevator lobby Nov. 29. Decorated with paper ornaments identifying the ages, genders, sizes and wish-lists of the children of Veterans, VA staff members could choose a family to sponsor, either individually or as part of a group. The sponsor then contacted the referring social worker listed on the ornament and arranged to provide the unwrapped gifts.

Simultaneously, a private donor wishing to be identified only as “Sailor Clause” collected toys, bikes and games donated in memory of Jeanine Arseneault of New Bedford, Mass., who passed away Nov. 6, from drop-boxes at organizations across Fall River, New Bedford and the surrounding area. The Dirty River Group, a Fall River motorcycle club, helped collect and deliver the items, which were brought to the Providence VAMC warehouse Dec. 12, where social workers and other VA staff could select gifts for the Veteran families with whom they work.

“The Giving Tree is one of those things that helps make the Providence VA Medical Center a special place for both Veterans and employees,” said Dr. Susan MacKenzie, director of the Providence VAMC. “It’s an honor to help brighten the holidays for Veteran families who have sacrificed so much in service to our nation.”

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Gifts for Veteran Families, 2 of 2



Stacks of games, crafts and puzzles at the Providence VA Medical Center warehouse Dec. 13, 2016, waiting for VA social workers to pick them up and deliver them to Veteran families in need. In all, an estimated \$60,000 worth of toys and games were collected by VA employees, volunteers, Veterans, and a private donor wishing to be identified only as "Sailor Clause," who collected toys from organizations across Fall River, New Bedford and the surrounding area. (Providence VA Medical Center photo by Winfield Danielson)

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