



NEWS

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Toys for Tots Coordinators Convene from Around the Nation to Plan for 2015 Holidays Santa's helpers gather at The National Conference Center in Leesburg

LEESBURG, Va., Sept. 14, 2015—Toys for Tots is returning to The National Conference Center for the sixth year to hold its 2015 Toys for Tots Coordinator Conference. Nearly 500 coordinators from around the nation will attend the conference from September 17-20. They will learn everything from handling donations and coordinating toy drop offs to a basic understanding of how IRS tax rules affect the campaign. The meeting also provides participants the opportunity to learn from each other and share experiences.

Toys for Tots is a national charity program run by the United States Marine Corps Reserve which collects and distributes toys to less fortunate children whose parents may be struggling financially and unable to purchase gifts during the traditional Christmas holiday season. It is the only charitable endeavor associated with the Department of Defense that reaches out to local communities. The program was started in 1947 in California by Major William L. Hendricks and was inspired by his wife, Diane, when she tried to donate a doll to a needy child but could not find an organization to do so. At Diane's suggestion, he gathered a group of local Marine reservists who coordinated and collected 5,000 toys for local children. Hendricks used his position as director of public relations at Warner Brothers Studio to enlist celebrity support and later asked his friend, Walt Disney, to design a poster for a national campaign. The result was the Toys for Tots three-car train logo.

The program took off nationally and in 1980, shifted slightly to accept only new toys as reservists were no longer able to dedicate the time required to refurbish used toys. Through 2014, the Toys for Tots program and foundation, has collected and distributed nearly five hundred million toys.

Some of the coordinators attending the meeting at The National were there from the beginning of the program, others are new. "It's a great place for us to hold our training and education sessions," stated Major Brian A. Murray, USMC (Ret), vice president for operations of Marine Toys for Tots Foundation. The very first meeting was held at the Marine Base at Quantico in the Officer Candidate School where the group had meals in the mess hall and shared showers. "We're excited to be at The National Conference Center again this year. We believe the training facilities here will ensure a better experience for our coordinators, and the great accommodations are very much appreciated," Murray added.

“We are honored to have been selected again by this prestigious organization with such a worthy cause,” explained Geoff Lawson, vice president and general manager at The National and West Belmont Place. “We want Toys for Tots to have the best possible training environment and be able to set the tone for a highly successful holiday season this year.”

For more information, visit www.conferencecenter.com.

More about The National Conference Center and West Belmont Place

Located in Northern Virginia 12 miles from Dulles International Airport and 35 miles from Washington, D.C., The National Conference Center is one of the largest and most comprehensive conference centers in the nation. With 917 guest rooms and over 250,000 square feet of meeting and group function space, including the West Belmont Place catering complex with its 16,500 square foot ballroom, The National has become the nation’s headquarters for productive meetings and West Belmont Place the hub for Loudoun County and surrounding area social functions. West Belmont Place was named 2013 Best Venue by the International Special Events Society. The National Conference Center is also on the GSA schedule. The National is owned by NCC PS Enterprises LLC, a venture between PCCP, LLC and Stoneleigh Capital, LLC., which retained LaKota Hotels & Resorts to oversee all aspects of the day-to-day operations. For information call 800-640-2684 or visit www.conferencecenter.com.

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