

About the T4T Program

How the Centre County Toys for Tots Program works:

The Nittany Leathernecks serve as the program facilitator. Members rarely interface with actual benefactors of the program. Only on rare occasion does that happen. Working closely with the Centre County Adult Services Office, Pennsylvania State Police Foster Child Program, and the State College Elks Club, the detachment is the conduit for collecting, wrapping, sorting, and logistically delivering toys to the service agencies (noted above) that provide the actual distribution. Needs established by the Centre County Adult Services Office are provided to the detachment. The detachment then provides four items for each child/young adult. These items include toys, books, games, sporting equipment, and other appropriate articles for young adults such as jewelry, watches, radios, backpacks, etc. Generally speaking, two of the four items received will be quality items the child/young adult can particularly enjoy. Each year the annual campaign ensures that over 3000 less-than-fortunate Centre County children enjoy the holiday spirit. The Centre County Toys for Tots campaign accommodates religious protocols (in concert with economic eligibility) for Christmas, Hanukkah, Ramadan, and Kwanza during the December-January holiday season.

The actual execution of the process takes place in a remarkable two-week time window. Additionally, other social service agencies are provided any leftover toys that remain. To execute the logistics, and also provide a safety net to catch those needy children who may fall through the crack at the last minute, the Nittany Leathernecks have enlisted the help of local fire and police units. Fire companies throughout the county provide transportation from the wrapping/distribution site to the area food banks. The distribution we are talking about includes an average of approximately 14,000 toys each year. Local police units each receive a cache of toys so that any short-notice calls for help can be handled immediately especially, for example, on the eve of Hanukkah or Christmas. The use of police personnel for last minute situations is unique. The Nittany Leathernecks feel it is important for young kids (and parents) in economically disadvantaged homes to develop positive interactions with local law enforcement personnel. Letting police units close the final loop is a unique opportunity to create a positive encounter. It is a win-win situation for all concerned.