

## Stuffing the Bus

by Whitney Harper, Library Associate, MidPointe Library System, OH

In 2019, MidPointe Library System had an idea to take collecting items for Toys for Tots to a bigger level. Toys for Tots began as a Los Angeles charitable effort in 1947 by Major Bill Hendricks, USMCR. This program was inspired by his wife, Diane, who was looking for an organization to donate a homemade Raggedy Ann doll to a needy child but found no such organization to do so. A group of Marines were organized and that first year roughly 5,000 toys were gathered for needy children.

This program continues to bring toys to children all over the United States. In the Butler and Warren County, Ohio areas alone over 13,000 children are supported with the Toys for Tots program. The goal of the program in our area is to make sure each family is able to choose one larger gift, two smaller gifts for each child, as well as making sure they have a book for each child and a game for the family so they can spend quality time together!

MidPointe Library System has been collecting toys at our branch locations for many years. A brilliant idea came from our Library on Wheels department (who houses the Bookmobile and during summer can be found at summer lunch stops with our school districts). The Bookmobile should also be involved in collecting toys; and our goal should be to stuff the bus! One of the amazing things about Toys for Tots is making sure these children have access to books and receive one as a gift. What an amazing opportunity for the Bookmobile to participate and promote this fantastic program!



We had the opportunity to go out into our community with Toys for Tots, talk about this program and collect books, toys, and games for Toys for Tots. We had stops at all 5 of our locations for community members to come out and support this cause. We collected over 75 toys in 2 days. The library was able to donate several hundred books for the cause as well! To know that these children will have the opportunity to enjoy a special Christmas and have a seed planted for a lifetime joy of reading is fantastic. Nothing compares to this; it's a librarian thing!

We thought of the idea to incorporate the Bookmobile on very short notice and the community still came through and made this a success for Toys for Tots. We can't wait until next

year when we have more time to plan and promote our pickup stops and to make it a bigger and better opportunity to serve our community! We want the bus to bust! It's never too early for all libraries to think of ways to help the communities we serve.