

Michelle Obama plays Santa Claus for Toys for Tots



First lady Michelle Obama takes a portion of donated toys collected by the White House Executive Office staff in support of the Toys for Tots drive to a warehouse in Stafford, Va. Also pictured is Staff Sargeant Christopher D. Gordon, who is the Quantico Campaign Coordinator for the Quantico Toys for Tots Campaign. (The Washington Post)

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By Robin Givhan

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First lady Michelle Obama played Santa Claus on Wednesday afternoon, delivering two bulging sacks of donated toys to the Marine Corps Reserve Toys for Tots campaign in Quantico.

Earlier this month, when she unveiled the White House Christmas decorations, Obama also kicked off a toy collection drive to benefit Toys for Tots. So far, White House staff have donated some 500 gifts including board games and Legos and at least one spectacular Barbie Corvette. Obama delivered about a third of those goodies to Quantico. The rest will go to a distribution center in Anacostia. No word on which facility will be the lucky recipient of the Barbie luxury automobile.

The first lady arrived at the large, unheated warehouse where the toys are sorted, a space decorated with gold garlands and red bells. She was greeted by volunteers and Toys for Tots staff, as well as several Marines, including Staff Sgt. Christopher Gordon, who served as the Quantico campaign coordinator.

Gordon, tall and rather dashing, explained the sorting system to Obama, who then went to work helping separate donations by the age and gender of the recipients. She also thanked the Marines, noting that, "at a time when you all are already serving . . . you show America you can dig even deeper in this time to make sure kids all across America have something good to wake up to on Christmas morning."

And she added that the White House will be involved in the campaign as long as she's calling 1600 Pennsylvania Ave. home.

So far, the Toys for Tots campaign has collected 59,064 gifts and 74,406 have been requested. Obama also made a special plea for donations appropriate for older kids, particularly those age 10 to 14, who have not received the same kind of attention as toddlers.

"You're 11; you're still waiting for Santa," she said. "I'm going to go back shopping. We still have a couple more days."