



TOY: Making Christmas Wishes Come True

By MATTHEW RAY

The children in the HIV/AIDS unit of Children's Hospital of Philadelphia (CHOP) have had their life touched by both poverty and a debilitating illness. These young patients are undoubtedly the most in need of holiday cheer.

To ensure that no child is left lonely over the holidays, whether they celebrate Hanukkah, Ramadan, Kwanza or Christmas, CHOP partnered with the Delaware Valley Legacy Fund (DVLf) to create TOY. The TOY holiday event brings friends, family, donors, activists and allies out for a special holiday event to support the DVLf and bring smiles to children at the CHOP. This year's event is expected to raise significant money for the DVLf's community building programs, as well as ensure every child at CHOP is filled with holiday cheer.

"I wish you could see the looks on our children's faces as they tear into gifts," explained Laura Hinds, patient relations manager for the hospital and its satellite sites. "A simple gift can almost wipe away memories of the blood tests, multiple hospital stays and the every day struggle that HIV brings to their world."

Now in its second year, TOY allows adults to connect with their inner child while giving hope to those who need it. The event offers attendees a chance to mingle, dance, drink and eat while only asking for a small cash and toy donation. The clever elves behind the TOY event have thought of every toy option for the tiniest of tots as well as teenagers.

"Many people love to shop for younger kids, but as our population ages up, it has been increasingly difficult to find donors for gifts that interest the old children," explained Hinds. "TOY has helped with that and this year it is even better as we have a Targetlist (gift registry) that makes it easy for folks to purchase gifts online with the guidance of my staff who know these kids the best."

To ensure the event is top-notch, an all-volunteer team was assembled from Philadelphia's captains of industry and civic leaders. Local businesses donated hours of time and energy to create a polished marketing campaign, a public service announcement (insert link) and made sure that nearly every aspect of the event would cost the beneficiaries nothing. These efforts ensured that both CHOP and the DVLf will reap the full generosity of TOY attendees.

"This year we've established an extremely talented TOY steering committee who have been working hard since the summer," explained Joseph Matthews, TOY co-chairperson. "We are looking to draw three times the attendance of last year's event (about 450 people) and raise over \$25,000.00 in charitable contributions. It also brings greater attention to the missions of the DVLf and CHOP, while creating the holiday event of the season."

It is unavoidable that the holiday season will lead to indulging in some heavy social behavior. Why not participate in an event that allows you to have a healthy helping of season cheer and serve a worthy cause. TOY is guilt-free fun that lets you give and receive.

TOY

Friday, December 5, 6 p.m. through 9 p.m.

Marc Phillips Showroom

Marketplace Design Center

2400 Market Street

\$25 per person and one unwrapped toy

On-street Parking Available

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