



CITY OF KENNER

PRESS RELEASE

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ACTING MAYOR

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IBARNES NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATION IN PARTNERSHIP WITH TOYS FOR TOTS FOUNDATION TOY DISTRIBUTION FOR KENNER KIDS SET FOR DEC. 14

Kenner, LA. – A huge toy giveaway for needy Kenner children, put on by iBarnes and the United States Marine Corps' Toys for Tots program, will be held Dec. 14 from 5 to 8 p.m. at the Pontchartrain Center, 4545 Williams Blvd.

This is the 10th year for the toy giveaway with the USMC, said Makeisha D. Barnes, founder of iBarnes. But the program has grown significantly in the past year and now focuses on kids between the ages of 0 and 16. Four elementary schools in Kenner are targeted: Chateau Estates, Clancy-Maggiore, G.T. Woods and Walter G. Schneckeburger.

However, Barnes said any Kenner parent with a child in need can register for the toy giveaway, no matter where they go to school.

The event includes a bicycle raffle every 30 minutes, beginning at 5:30 p.m., candy, cookies and punch for the kids and an appearance from Chuck E. Cheese.

Barnes said she and a group of friends wanted to give back to their community following Hurricane Katrina and decided in 2006 to organize a toy distribution program to give toys to kids. The program became successful and the Marines joined the picture soon after as a major supplier.

Last year, the Marines reorganized their own Toys for Tots giveaway and asked Barnes, who lives in Waggaman, to be their representative in the city of Kenner.

Barnes said she was initially motivated by her experiences as a mother at the age of 17. She now has a son who is a freshman at Midland University Fremont, Nebraska as well as two other biological children and two step-sons.

"As a result of a teenage pregnancy, I know what it's like to not have and to struggle," Barnes said. "We want to make a difference this holiday season for kids in need who might not get a gift otherwise."

Barnes said she has extended the registration period for parents to sign up their children to receive gifts through this week. So far, about 400 kids have signed up and there is room for 500, she said.

"We're also hoping to find some additional sponsors," Barnes said. "The more kids we can help the better – that's what this is all about."

For more information about the event or to become a sponsor, contact Barnes at (504) 570-7380. To register online, go to iBarnes.org.

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