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## Toys For Tots begins 65th year

Santa Barbara County launches annual drive



NOVEMBER 06, 2012 12:10 AM • [STAFF REPORT](#)

Sixty-five years ago, Maj. Bill Hendricks of the U.S. Marine Corps Reserves and a group of reservists in Los Angeles collected and distributed 5,000 toys to needy children — and the Toys For Tots movement was born.

Today, there are nearly 25,000 Marines, Marine Corps League members, Marine Corps veterans and volunteers involved in the annual campaign.

Members of the Marine Corps League Coastal Valleys Detachment 1340, the Community Action Commission of Santa Barbara County and Santa Maria City Councilwoman Alice Patino kicked off the 2012 Toys For Tots toy drive Monday outside Santa Maria City Hall.

The familiar white collection boxes with the Toys For Tots train logo will be placed at participating businesses, churches, and fire and police stations throughout the area. The drive runs through Dec. 15.

“The mission is to collect the toys, with the primary goal to deliver them to the less fortunate families,” said Sgt. Soledad Kennedy, the program coordinator for Santa Barbara County.

She said the need for toys is even greater this year. Last year, approximately 1,500 local families received gifts from the Toys For Tots drive. That number was up more than 600 from 2010.

The Marines hold a separate Toys For Tots drive for the Lompoc area, which will begin Thursday.

In the Santa Ynez Valley, the Toys For Tots effort is blended with the Fulfill a Wish campaign organized by the nonprofit Santa Ynez Valley People Helping People.

### Information

- For more information or to donate, visit [www.toys4totscentralca.org](http://www.toys4totscentralca.org)