

12-10-2009

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University of Montana--Missoula. Office of University Relations

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Recommended Citation

University of Montana--Missoula. Office of University Relations, "Griz for Kids Toy Drive brings in record donations" (2009).
University of Montana News Releases. 22087.
<https://scholarworks.umt.edu/newsreleases/22087>

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NEWS RELEASE

Dec. 10, 2009

Contact: Allison Squires, University Relations events coordinator, 406-243-4853,
allison.squires@umontana.edu.

GRIZ FOR KIDS TOY DRIVE BRINGS IN RECORD DONATIONS

MISSOULA —

When the Montana Grizzlies football team called on fans to support the fifth annual Griz for Kids Toy Drive, Griz Nation responded in full force, donating more than 3,000 toys and a record \$3,500 in cash.

The drive kicked off Nov. 12 at The Bookstore at The University of Montana with nearly 30 Griz players, including co-chairs Marc Mariani and Levi Horn, collecting toys and signing autographs for hundreds of fans. The drive continued when thousands of Griz faithful brought donations to the Nov. 14 game against Northern Colorado.

Former Griz offensive lineman Chris Orwig started Griz for Kids in 2004 after realizing the potential the 25,000 fans who pack Washington-Grizzly Stadium have to make a difference in the community. The drive, which is held in conjunction with Mountain FM's annual Mountain of Giving campaign, has grown every year since.

Mountain FM's Sheila Callahan, the main event coordinator, said the success of the drive wouldn't have been possible without the support of many community organizations, including Beach Transportation, whose drivers started handing out fliers and encouraging riders to donate weeks before the drive. Many Beach Transportation employees, retirees and their families also helped sort through thousands of toys after the drive ended.

“The ‘Beach Boys’ have been helping us with the very labor-intensive toy sort since the very first year,” Callahan said. “We could not do it without them.”

Several Missoula-area agencies benefitted from the drive, including Mountain Home Montana, Head Start, Early Head Start, the Missoula Indian Center, Youth Homes Inc., Watson Children’s Shelter, Big Brothers Big Sisters, YMCA and WORD.

“The agencies were just amazed this year when they came to collect toys — it was the best selection we have ever had,” Callahan said.

Callahan also credited Mariani and Horn for the drive’s success, as they spent hours giving media interviews to promote the event.

“I think the interviews Marc Mariani and Levi Horn did right before the drive really helped,” Callahan said. “They told people what toys the kids really wanted, and they went out and got them.”

All Missoula Federal Credit Union locations are still accepting cash donations for the Mountain of Giving campaign. Donations can be sent to Mountain of Giving, c/o the Mountain Broadcasting Foundation, P.O. Box 309, Missoula, MT 59806. All donations are tax deductible.

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