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Project Toy Box - United Way of Tri-County helping families bring home some fun during COVID-19 crisis

Framingham, MA - Countless children from lower-income families are in for a big surprise! The United Way of Tri-County (UWTC) announced today that they donated thousands of brand-new toys and games to underprivileged children in MetroWest/495 Corridor communities through a program they have named Project Toy Box.

While parents and caregivers across the Commonwealth learned last month that their kids will not be returning to school this school year, the United Way of Tri-County decided they needed to give kids something to look forward to.

The organization partnered with 12 local social service agencies and non-profits across the region to get toys into the hands of kids ages 5 to 12. Brand new games and toys to cheer them up while the stay at home order in Massachusetts crawls on.

"We are always here to provide critical support to families in need, but we also want to give children something to smile about during an extremely stressful time," said Paul Mina, President & CEO at the United Way of Tri-County. "In times when there is so much bad news, it feels good to do something that simply brings joy to a child."

A tractor-trailer packed with 52 pallets, all stacked with brand new LEGOs, sports balls, stuffed animals, toy trucks, board games, activity books, and more arrived at the United Way's Downtown Framingham warehouse early Monday afternoon.

Staff spent hours sorting items by age range and preparing for agency distribution on May 5 and again on May 7. The Framingham warehouse space on Blandin Ave. used to store and sort the toys was generously donated by the Stonegate Group of Natick.

In an effort to reduce the spread of COVID-19 and adhere to the statewide ban on large gatherings, the United Way of Tri-County asked that agencies arrive at their warehouse to collect the games and toys, and urged social distancing and the use of masks. In turn, agencies are distributing the donated items to qualifying families following the same safety guidelines.

The United Way of Tri-County is known for giving presents away during their Hope for the Holidays program each December, but recently secured the truckload of toys through their ongoing relationship with Good360 to help ease children's anxiety during the Coronavirus pandemic.

"We are tremendously grateful that the United Way of Tri-County had the foresight to pull together these donations of toys. We appreciate the opportunity to provide moments of levity and joy to the youth and families we serve during the health crisis," said Nick Kane, Development Manager, Wayside Youth & Family Support Network.

Steve Zepf, Director of Operations at the Boys & Girls Clubs of MetroWest said, "Any support we can provide for our members and families during this uncertain time is our goal. It's particularly important for our economically disadvantaged members to have access to new activities and games to keep them busy during this difficult time."

If you would like to support the United Way of Tri-County's COVID-19 emergency response fund, please visit their website at www.uwotc.org/covid.

About the United Way of Tri-County

The United Way of Tri-County is a community building organization that brings people together to care for one another. We provide programs and services, connect volunteers, strengthen agencies, teach social responsibility, and meet the critical needs of the community with the help of people like you. For more information visit the United Way Website at www.uwotc.org

About Good360

Good360's mission is to help people in need by inspiring companies to support nonprofits and does so by connecting companies that have products to donate with nonprofits who need them. Since 1983, Good360 has distributed more than \$9 billion in donated goods in the U.S. and around the world, helping its network of more than 57,000 prequalified nonprofit members strengthen communities and improve the lives of millions of people in need, including those impacted by disasters. Working with our partners, Good360 is able to distribute product to where it is needed most, provide impact data and stories, keep usable goods out of landfills, protect corporate brands and help millions of people facing challenging life circumstances. For more information, visit www.good360.org.

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