

Blue Angels

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Blue Angels deliver toys to Superstorm Sandy victims

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PENSACOLA, Fla. – The U.S. Navy Flight Demonstration Squadron, the Blue Angels, transformed the squadron's C-130 Hercules, affectionately known as Fat Albert, into a modern-day Santa's sleigh in support of the U.S Marine Corps Reserve Toys for Tots Program, bringing the joy of Christmas to numerous children in the Northeast who were affected by Superstorm Sandy.



The Blue Angel crew, who left from their home base of Naval Air Station Pensacola, Fla., made stops in Atlanta and Washington to pick up toys on the way to Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst in Wrightstown, N.J., where the toys would answer the need for children's gifts in this area of the country.

For many residents of the Northeast, Superstorm Sandy has put celebrating the holidays on the back burner, replaced by a different set of priorities. One family in particular was invited to the joint base airfield so the Toys for Tots effort could bring some Christmas joy to their children.

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Heather and Peter Sabey, whose entire first floor of their home in Tom's River, N.J. was flooded during the storm, said their daily activities are now tied up with trying to restore some sense of normalcy to their lives and the lives of their children.

The Sabey family says they are busy taking care of recovery efforts in their home and driving kids to and from school so the holiday season has taken on a different meaning this year.

"Going Christmas shopping for our kids has taken the back seat to us making calls to insurance companies and trying to get our lives back," said Heather Sabey.

"So I think receiving Christmas presents thanks to Toys for Tots today is going to be huge for our kids to feel the love and the joy of the season from all over the country."

According to Peter Sabey the Toys for Tots effort takes a lot of burden off them and other parents in the area who are unable to provide a typical Christmas to their children this year because of the devastation from the storm.

"It's great to see people come together during this time of hardship," said Sabey.

"It's also great to see that not only my kids but many kids in the community here are going to get that Christmas they hoped for thanks to Toys for Tots."



According to Blue Angel Commanding Officer/Flight Leader Cdr. Tom Frosch, supporting the Toys for Tots effort in the Northeast is an honor, especially in response to the devastation brought upon by Superstorm Sandy.

"It's simply a matter of taking the opportunity to do what we can for those in need," said Frosch. "It wasn't a question of whether we could support this outstanding cause, but rather,

how soon we could provide support and get toys to the children."

President and Chief Executive Officer for the Marines Toys for Tots Foundation, retired U.S. Air Force Lt. Gen. Pete Osman, stated that having a working relationship with the Blue Angels serves a vital mission for the Toys for Tots program.

"There's a great visibility in the Blue Angels program as far as it being a community outreach program much like Toys for Tots is," said Osman.

"So it really is a natural fit having the Blue Angels lend their support to Toys for Tots."

Among the crew of Blue Angels who made the trip for this mission were some active-duty servicemembers originally from the Northeast, giving this trip a special meaning to them.

Logistics Specialist 2nd Class William Kelly, a supervisor in the Blue Angel's Supply Department, was visiting family in New Jersey and rode out the early days of the storm in his family's home. He and his wife, Kaydee, had to drive to an airport in Pennsylvania to get a flight back to work at the Florida-based squadron. He was eager to take this special trip to N.J. to assist in the effort.

"My family and I are thankful we made it through the storm unharmed and without much loss of property other than losing power and water. But I can't imagine how the children in this area feel having possibly lost their home or school or even a loved one to the storm. And to have this happen right before Christmas is especially sad," said Kelly.

"Coming on this trip to help out and bring a little Christmas joy to them was something I jumped at soon as I heard about it."

For the past three years the Blue Angels squadron has flown toys and gifts to varied parts of the country in support of the Toys for Tots mission. And while the Blue Angels' mission consists of being ambassadors of good will representing the U.S. military, this mission was very special to the crew involved due to the holiday season and the many children whose Christmas is all but non-existent.

An all-Marine crew of three pilots and five enlisted aircrew fly Fat Albert, provide logistical support for the team and open the air shows by displaying the tactical flight characteristics of the C-130 aircraft.

For more information on the Blue Angels, visit the squadron's web site:

www.blueangels.navy.mil.

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