

## Tuesday's drive supported Toys for Tots



CHRISTOPHER J. HUGHES PHOTO / FOR GO LACKAWANNA

Santa Claus thanks Scranton resident Jim Wintermantel for his donation to the COLTS "Stuff the Bus" campaign to aid Toys for Toys on Tuesday.

# COLTS successfully STUFFS THE BUS

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SCRANTON – Tuesday was cold, even for Santa Claus.

As the man in red stayed warm near an industrial heater and wished Merry Christmas to passers-by on the Spruce Street side of Courthouse Square, friends from the County of Lackawanna Transit System and the Marine Wing Support Squadron 472 Detachment Wyoming thanked those bringing money, books and new, unwrapped toys downtown.

On Tuesday, COLTS employees braved frigid temperatures from 6 a.m. to 6 p.m., all to help local children this holiday. The 12-hour effort aided the Marine Corps Toys for Tots Foundation drive. Support Squadron 472 serves Lackawanna, Luzerne, Susquehanna, Wyoming, Sullivan, Tioga, Bradford and Potter counties and helped 22,000 children in the region in 2009.

This year's effort is a slight revision from the 2009 "Stuff the Bus" campaign, according to COLTS Communications Director Gretchen Wintermantel. Last year, COLTS teamed up with disc jockeys from Rock 107 to collect

### FOOD DRIVE

COLTS continues to conduct its non-perishable food drive on its buses each Thursday through December 23. Collected items will be given to The Salvation Army, United Neighborhood Centers, Bread Basket of Northeast Pennsylvania, and St. Francis of Assisi Soup Kitchen for distribution.

food from 6 a.m. to 10 a.m. at local grocery stores during the station's morning show.

The Spruce Street location allowed residents riding COLTS buses and even those just passing through downtown Scranton to

drop off their donations.

By noon, volunteers had already filled eight donation boxes to the brim and received a bicycle that was loaded onto one of the company's historically-themed trolleys.

Despite the economic downturn that has affected charitable donations throughout the year, Wintermantel said the drive was a success.

"You ask people to give, and people give," she said. "There's such a need this year. Food pantry donations have dipped so much, so the need for Toys For Tots, I

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would assume, is probably greater this year. We just wanted to play some small part to help.”

COLTS has continued their annual food drive, as well. Plastic containers on all COLTS bus routes every Thursday through December 23 are used so riders can donate canned goods and non-perishable food items to be distributed to local food banks.

While folks may have less to give, that didn't stop the generosity of some in the region from shining through Tuesday.

“We had one woman come and fill an entire box by herself,”

LCpl. Jayson Braun, 22, of Kingston said. This year marks the local Marine's first year working for the Toys For Tots campaign. He said seeing others give so much in tough times was “awesome.”

When they weren't receiving toys and other donations, COLTS workers were treated to hot chocolate from well-wishers along with pizza and hoagies courtesy of Subway and Electric City Pizza.

All told, the drive gathered more than 600 toys and \$1,106 in donations.

“It just shows the generosity of the people who live and work in downtown Scranton and Lackawanna County,” Wintermantel said.