

TEAM kicks off holiday toy drive

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By Patricia Villers, Register Staff

ANSONIA — Thanksgiving may still be a few weeks off, but staff and volunteers at Training, Education and Manpower Inc. are already planning the Valley Toys for Tots campaign.

The community agency held its Toys for Tots kickoff breakfast Thursday at John J. Sullivan's Restaurant. More than 70 people attended.

TEAM Vice President of Development Diane Stroman thanked John Markette and Charlie Sullivan, owners of John J. Sullivan's, for donating the breakfast as they have in past years. "They are not only supporters of TEAM, they also support other nonprofit organizations in the Valley," she said.

Stroman also thanked Ansonia for letting TEAM use the city's ATP building at 497 E. Main St. for the toy distribution. The "store" will be set up this year on the fifth floor, Stroman said.

Volunteers are needed starting today, when TEAM will start accepting applications from clients, through Dec. 15.

Stroman made a special plea for the 10- to 12-year-old age group. Suggestions include: hand-held electronic games, purses, wallets, watches, scooters, skateboards, model cars and planes, computer games, science kits, craft and jewelry kits, blow dryers, sports equipment, portable CD players and clock radios.

In addition, \$5 minimum gift cards are suggested for that age group from such businesses as Hollywood Video and Blockbuster Video, Seymour Entertainment Cinemas, Wal-Mart, Bob's Stores, Westfield Connecticut Post mall, Target and Marshalls.

Last year, 8,053 toys were donated, and \$12,965.10 in monetary donations was received.

Stroman presented a plaque to Lynn Patafio, manager of Staffworks Inc. at 117 Main St., Seymour, to recognize the agency as "a community partner and a significant supporter of our Toys for Tots campaign."

Patafio said Staffworks' office will be open Nov. 30 during the annual Seymour Christmas Parade to collect toys, something that has been going on for the past five years. "It's gaining in popularity," Patafio said.

For a toy pickup or for information about volunteering, contact Trish Wigglesworth, 736-5420, ext. 1221, or twigglesworth@teaminc.org.

Stroman asked that donated items be dropped off at the Valley Toys for Tots store, 497 E. Main St., fifth floor, or at TEAM offices, 30 Elizabeth St., Derby.

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