



Message from the Bronx-Manhattan North Assoc. of Realtors CEO: God bless us, everyone! - by Eliezer Rodriguez

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On December 13, 2017, The Bronx-Manhattan North Association of Realtors (BMNAR) will celebrate its 33rd Annual Holiday Party and Toy Drive at the Marina del Rey Caterers. To me, it's more than a gathering of 300 members, friends and real estate professional networking and celebrating the holiday season. At this event, five years ago, I helped to create "Operation BMNAR's Kids."

On October 29, 2012, Super Storm Sandy slammed into the East Coast and caused a lot of devastation and killed at least 100 people in the U.S. It was reported the storm caused 36 fatalities in New York City and at least 14 of those lives were lost in Staten Island. At BMNAR's November 2012 monthly meeting of the Board of Governors, Kathy Zamechansky, vice president for commercial industrial division, KZA Realty Group, suggested we partner with The Bronx YMCA and give some toys to families in Staten Island. Mark Engel, CEO of Langsam Property Services Corp., gave credit to Kathy's idea by naming the initiative "Operation Kathy's Kids."

When I shared the idea with Sharleen Brown, executive director for The Bronx YMCA, she loved it and agreed to take on the responsibility of identifying the families who were to receive our gifts. 12 families from Staten Island were selected to receive our gifts. The kids from the YMCA's afterschool program at P.S. 108 in The Bronx made one Christmas card for each family using the 12 days of Christmas as their theme. All we needed now was the gifts.

430 members, friends and real estate professionals from the New York metropolitan area attended the December 5, 2012, Holiday Party and Toy Drive and most brought an unwrapped new toy for "Operation Kathy's Kids." 18 companies purchased two to five tables and made our event their office holiday party. The music was great! The food was great! We had a great time celebrating a wonderful time of the year.

On December 22, 2012, Sharlene and I took off in my burgundy Honda Pilot sleigh and headed for Staten Island. 12 families affected by Super Storm Sandy each received a \$100 gift card, a bag of toys, and a holiday card created by elves attending the YMCA's after school program at P.S. 108. Tears of joy flowed from the eyes of one mother for the helping hands she received in her time of need. A home visit to one father who was still in the midst of repairing his destroyed basement, got choked up by the generosity of BMNAR as he accepted our gifts for his family. Threes day later, "Operation Kathy's Kids" delivered gifts to 12 Bronx families who needed a little help during the holiday season.

When Kathy became president of BMNAR in 2014, she insisted that we change the name of our toy drive distribution to "Operation BMNAR Kids." On December 13, 2017, BMNAR will host its 33rd Annual Holiday Party and Toy Drive at the luxurious Marina del Rey. The evening promises to be an evening full of laughter, networking, and 4½ hours of unlimited premium buffet and drinks. To burn away calories, first class entertainment will keep the crowd dancing with an amazing assortment of music and a "selfie booth" to capture the moment.

What I want for Christmas is for you to save money by making BMNAR's Holiday Party and Toy Drive your office holiday party. Also, for each guest to bring a new unwrapped gift. This year, "Operation BMNAR's Kids" plans to visit at least 30 Bronx Families. So, if you see a decorated burgundy Honda Pilot sleigh on December 25th with Papa (me) and Mama Clause (my wife) in the front seat, Sharleen Brown and two elves in the back seat (my sons: Miguel and Cristian), that will be us spreading the holiday spirit for the sixth straight year. "God bless us, everyone!"

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