



Operation BMNAR's Kids

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By Eliezer Rodriguez

Before I was officially on The Bronx-Manhattan North Association of Realtors' (BMNAR) payroll, I volunteered to work with Janine Schall, BMNAR's office manager, in planning the Association's 2012 Holiday Party. At a meeting of the board of governors, I really appreciated the charitable holiday spirit of the governors.

Kathy Zamechansky, 2013 president-elect, KZA Realty Group, Inc., suggested that families affected by Super Storm Sandy in Staten Island and The Bronx ought to be the recipients of the Toy Drive. Zamechansky also suggested that BMNAR work with the YMCAs located in those two boroughs to identify affected families. The idea of working with the Ys was a perfect one as I was the sitting chairman of The Bronx Y board of managers. Mark Engel, past president of BMNAR and the president of Langsam Property Services Corp., giving credit to Zamechansky's idea, then chimed in and came up with the name "Operation Kathy's Kids" (OKK) for our 2012 Toy Drive. Yours truly volunteered to organize the toy drive.

At the Annual Holiday Party, I was pleased to welcome our guests and many did come with unwrapped toys. According to Richard Guarino, 2013-2014 BMNAR president, "Donating Christmas and Chanukah gifts and giving them to children less fortunate is the ideal way of making the spirit of the holiday season memorable." The next four and one half hours was filled with fun, plenty of food and good music. By the end of the night, the emotional drain of hosting my first holiday party had taken its toll. Now it was time to clean-up, pack-up and load all the toys in my truck. By the time I got home, I was exhausted but excited over all the toys collected.

Janine Schall, Sharlene Brown, executive director for The Bronx Y and I began organizing the toy distribution. Twelve families in Staten Island and twelve families in The Bronx were selected to receive gifts from "Operation Kathy Kids." I checked my list not once, but twice. I loaded all the gifts on my burgundy SUV Pilot and with Mama Lisa Rodriguez by my side, my two elves, Miguel and Cristian Rodriguez, and my helper, Sharlene Brown, all sitting in the back seat, we made our rounds and the holiday spirit that was overflowing from the BMNAR office on Williamsbridge Rd. was shared. The toy distribution went without a hitch and happy smiles were placed on the faces of many. I referred to the 2012 Holiday Season and to "Operation Kathy's Kids" as "The Miracle on Williamsbridge Rd."

The 2013 Holiday Toy Drive was even more successful than 2012. Simon Shkury, Ariel Property Advisors, added to the success by donating \$600 to "OKK." The same cast of characters were involved in the distribution and the same burgundy Honda Pilot sleigh was loaded with gifts donated by realtors and their friends. On December 25, 2013, 15 homes were visited and we shared the BMNAR holiday spirit with 45 kids. We also gave toys to another 100 kids from a local church and they were touched by the generosity of BMNAR's members and friends.

Both in 2012 and 2103, Bronx News 12 did a wonderful job covering "Operation Kathy's Kids" and they shared the realtor's holiday spirit with their viewers. At the time of this writing, our 30th Anniversary Holiday Party and Toy Drive is three days away on December 4th, 2014. By the time this article appears in print, it is my wish that the number of unwrapped new toys collected is greater than the previous two years combined. Kathy Zamechansky is the current president of BMNAR and she has insisted that we change the name of our Toy Drive distribution to "Operation BMNAR's Kids. If you know of a family who may need a helping hand this holiday season, contact our office before December 22nd. If that child has been good and not naughty, maybe on December 25th Operation BMNAR's Kids will pull up on its burgundy Honda Pilot sleigh and deliver gifts triggered by your call. "God bless us all, everyone."

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