

A Tradition Five Years in the Making – 2012 Holiday Bear Drive

This past December marked the five year anniversary of William B. Meyer's Holiday Bear Drive. In the past week, company trucks and employees have delivered a thousand teddy bears to children spending the Holidays in local area hospitals. This year, William B. Meyer expanded their reach and donated teddy bears to hospitals in Connecticut, Massachusetts and New York. Hospitals like: Backus Hospital, Baystate Children's Hospital, Bridgeport Hospital, Blythedale Children's Hospital, Connecticut Children's Medical Center and St. Vincent's Hospital.

According to each hospital's policies, these teddy bears will be distributed throughout the year to children admitted for a single procedure or for long-term care. However, regardless of policy, each and every teddy bear shares the same purpose: to help rehabilitate a sick child. Amy Huff, Child Life Specialist at Yale New Haven Children's Hospital-Bridgeport Campus, manages the hospital's toy donations and uses them for her work with the children. She uses toys as a gauge to see how well a child is recovering both physically and emotionally from an injury. *"Toys are more than toys. They are therapeutic tools used for children that have long roads to recovery. It makes them more willing to participate in procedures, rehab and therapy. Younger children use the toys for medical play and through this type of play are better able to understand and process what they are experiencing."* William B. Meyer teddy bears will welcome a child into a hospital setting and ease their path to recovery.

The teddy bear drive is one of the most anticipated events at William B. Meyer. Staff spends months organizing the logistics behind the drive. The result is well-worth it. Michael Cavallo, Director of Sales for the Storage and Logistics Group at William B. Meyer, helped distribute teddy bears at Connecticut Children's Medical Center. For him, *"the part that made it all worth it was walking in, seeing a little kid, and kneeling down next to them with a teddy bear. Just*



minutes would make their eyes light up. I knew that in that one moment, I had made their stay just a little bit better." President of William B. Meyer, Tom Gillon, Sr., is responsible for beginning the teddy bear campaign five years ago. The charm has yet to fade. As he handed out teddy bears, he proclaimed, *"This is my favorite day to come into work. This is my favorite thing we do."*

The drive for this initiative was born out of an integral part of William B. Meyer's philosophy: thank the local community for their support by giving back. Each year, in addition to the annual Holiday Bear Drive, William B. Meyer identifies local community needs and supports them either through direct donations, or through the donation of goods and services. This year, William B. Meyer contributed to: Cardinal Sheehan Center and Toy Drive, WPLR's Chaz and AJ Toy Drive, Fairfield Police Benevolent Association Holiday Toy Drive, The Shops at Farmington Valley Toy Drive, Thomas Merton Center, Toy Drive for Kids of Connecticut, The Boy Scouts of America – Connecticut Yankee Council, and the Red Cross – Sandy Relief Fund.

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