Toy drive held by URI Police an overwhelming success

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URI Police Department fills nine cruisers with gifts for needy families

KINGSTON, R.I. – December 14, 2015 — To a visitor entering the University of Rhode Island Police Department today, the building more closely resembles a toy store than a public safety office. Oversized stuffed animals, dolls, action figures and sports equipment line the walls up and down the main hallway, organized into sections to make it easier to find the latest Star Wars toys or Disney princesses.

That’s because the URI Police Department’s Stuff-A-Cruiser Holiday Toy Drive, held Saturday and Sunday outside Walmart in North Kingstown, was an overwhelming success.

The police department entered the weekend hoping to collect enough brand-new, unwrapped gifts to fill two police cruisers. Instead, the department came away with enough toys to fill nine SUV cruisers, and the gifts will be donated to families and children in the community and at Hasbro Children’s Hospital.

“We were hoping for the best, but we got so much more than we could have ever hoped,” said Officer Paul Hanrahan, who helped organize the drive.

The officers, most of whom donated their time off-duty to staff the event, set up in front of the store and the gifts came pouring in.

“Some people arrived with presents, others went into the store, bought some and gave them to us as they came out,” Hanrahan said. “We didn’t solicit for any presents, but people came up and asked us what we were doing. We told them and many of them came out of the store with toys for us to give to the kids.”

Officer Debbie Sheldon, who staffed the event, added:

“But that wasn’t the best part. The best was all the little kids who brought the gifts up to us,” she said. “Seeing the smiles on their faces, knowing they’re helping other kids, was priceless.”

In addition, the police collected monetary donations to purchase Stop & Shop gift cards, so needy families can enjoy a holiday meal and/or a week’s worth of groceries. One URI police officer, who asked to remain anonymous, donated $600 to help feed the families who need it.
“We were going to buy turkeys, but the feedback we received was that some people don’t even have the resources needed to cook a turkey dinner,” Hanrahan said. “Some of them don’t need a turkey. They need cereal, they need diapers. So we thought the gift cards would help us do the most good.”

The URI Police Department is still accepting toys and monetary donations at the station, 85 Briar Lane on the Kingston Campus.

A short of video of the event can be seen at YouTube.com.