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Volunteers create toys for needy kids

by [Paul Fallon](#)

Daily Mail Staff

CHARLESTON, W.Va. -- They might not actually be Santa's elves, but members of the Valley Woodworkers of West Virginia have been busy making sure needy children in the area have a merry Christmas.



Tom Hindman

The Valley Woodworkers of West Virginia fabricated about 675 wooden toys for needy children in the area. These handmade rocking chairs can be taken apart and put back together by children. Pictured

from left are club members Tom Liberatore, Bob Shingleton and Dan Pleska. Tom McClellan is in the background.

VOLUNTEERS CREATE TOYS FOR NEEDY KIDS (3 OF 4)



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A sample of the toys made for needy children in the area is displayed. About 25 club members helped with the project, including Tom Liberatore, left, Bob Shingleton, Dan Pleska, Tom McClellan, Andy Sheetz, Maureen Helvey, Diana Jeffries, David Bonnette and Rick Chandler.

VOLUNTEERS CREATE TOYS FOR NEEDY KIDS (4 OF 4)



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The Valley Woodworkers have been making wooden toys, such as this train, for the Salvation Army since 1991.

Those involved in the nonprofit organization assembled about 675 wooden toys -- designed as everything from baby cribs to cars -- for distribution to needy children in Kanawha, Putnam, Roane and Clay counties, said Andy Sheetz, vice president of the Valley Woodworkers toy committee.

The toys will be taken to the Charleston Area Command of the Salvation Army for distribution. The organization has been providing wooden toys to the Salvation Army since 1991, said Dan Pleska, secretary of the club.



Tom Hindman

Among the toys that will be presented to the Salvation Army this Sunday for distribution for Christmas are cars, trains, baby cribs, planes, rocking chairs and alphabet blocks.

Pleska, 61, of Scott Depot, said the club made only toy cradles and cars the first year of the program.

"And we didn't make as much as we did this year," he added.

However, the number of toys fluctuates year to year, and this year's total is not the most ever produced.

Although hours of work and thousands of dollars worth of donated material go into the project, both Sheetz and Pleska said they are not looking for praise. They both said knowing they are helping needy children have a happier holiday is all the thanks they need.

"We do this to give back to the community and make our corner of the world a better place," Sheetz said.

"A lot of kids wouldn't have a Christmas if it wasn't for this," Pleska said.

Sheetz, 49, of St. Albans, emphasized that although members of the club fabricated the toys, it took the whole community to get the program together. For example, Coastal Lumber Co. donated 3,200 board feet of ash lumber, and JC Hamer Company provided 224 board feet of maple, Sheetz said.

Evans Lumber and Home Depot in Teays Valley donated plywood as well, he added.

"There's no way we could have done this without the community support we've received," Sheetz said. "The lumber alone would probably have cost us over \$10,000."

Monetary donations were also accepted, Sheetz said. Toyota Manufacturing of West Virginia and Chad and Robin Pennington's 1st and 10 Foundation both gave \$2,000 to help fund the project.

The wooden toys, which include cars, planes, alphabet blocks and trains, will be sent to the Salvation Army's Kanawha City distribution center Sunday, said Capt. Thomas Richmond, area commander for the Charleston Salvation Army.

The local Salvation Army has struggled to have every child from the Angel Tree adopted this season. In the four counties, 1,639 eligible children were enrolled in this year's program.

About 300 of those children, dubbed "forgotten angels" by Richmond, have not been adopted.

Many of the wooden toys will be given to those remaining "angels."