

MACOMB DAILY

Toys For Tots Christmas Party to be hosted again by Angie's Toy Chest in Warren

Freda Payne, Wayback Machine and Dave Santia among the entertainment for the Dec. 7 event at Andiamo Warren



A U.S. Marine with the Marine Corps Reserves Toys for Tots program high-fives a child being gifted with a toy thanks to the program. Angie's Toy Chest will be presenting Angie D'Aleo Morelli's Annual Toys for Tots Christmas Party at 6 p.m. Dec. 7 at Andiamo Warren. Photo courtesy of United States Marine Corps Reserves Toys for Tots

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Angie D'Aleo Morelli used to host a Christmas party to raise donations for the Marines Corps Reserves Toys For Tots (TFT) but after 25 years and the loss of her husband she called it quits to allow someone else carry on the tradition.

Now she's back.

After a five-year hiatus, [Angie's Toy Chest Annual Toys For Tots Christmas Party](#) will be held Dec. 7 from 6 to 11 p.m. at [Andiamo Warren](#).

"I got started because my son was in the Marines," said Morelli. "I used to go down to Detroit and help them sort the toys in the warehouse."

She also believed in the mission that dates back to 1947.

Major Bill Hendricks of the Marine Corps Reserves and his wife are credited with starting the campaign. According to the [Corps' website](#), Hendricks' wife had a few hand-crafted dolls that she asked Hendricks to deliver to an agency that supports children in need. When he reported back that there were no such agencies, she asked him to start one. So, he enlisted the help of his fellow reservists in Los Angeles and they not only gave away her dolls but collected nearly 5,000 other toys for needy children.

Once word got out about their successful efforts the commandant directed all marine reserve sites to engage in operation toys for tots. The following year TFT became a national campaign.

While serving as a volunteer for the Detroit campaign, Morelli could see there was a need to support local efforts being done at Selfridge Air National Guard base in Harrison Township and this led her to start Angie's Toy Chest and the nonprofit's first holiday party nearly 30 years ago.

"The response was amazing," Morelli said of her first party back.

"We used to get some great toys, even bicycles, and every year the event got bigger," Morelli said, adding her husband, Bill, who died in 2018 was a big help and played Santa Claus every year.



A donation box stands filled to the top with donations for the Marine Corps Reserve Toys for Tots program. Photo courtesy of USMC/Cpl. Karina Lopezmata

The first year the party was held at Andiamo's there were about 75 guests but by the time the last event was held (2018) at Villa Penna's attendance was up to 1,100. Tickets for this year's party are \$65 plus a new unwrapped toy.

Admission includes a wonderful dinner, cash bar, silent auction, raffles and live entertainment including actress/singer Freda Payne and renowned artist Dave Santia.

Sponsorships ranging from \$700 to \$1,000 are still available.

Among those looking forward to the party is Staff Sgt. Anthony Palagallo.

"I'm pretty excited," said Palagallo, who will be collecting toys for the Marines at SANG. "I know she always had a good turnout and our need for toys is greater than ever."

Morelli said she never thought she would be doing the party again. After all, even members of the military retire after 20 years but people kept asking and the mission of Angie's Toy Chest remains.

"I guess you can't ever say, 'never,'" Morelli said. "Every child deserves a little Christmas and this is my little way of helping to make that happen."

To order tickets visit angiestoychest.org or call 586-863-2323.

For more information email info@angiestoychest.org