



BLOCK OF TOYS

**SERVES:
POOR**

**TIME:
NOV-DEC**

PRESENTING THE NEED TO MY TEAM

- Remember Christmas when you were a little kid; running to the Christmas tree to see what gifts Santa left you?
- How many presents did you get last year for Christmas? Did you get so many that you cannot remember all of them?
- Jesus says that whatever we do to the smallest and the least, we do to him.
- Think of the children of families who cannot afford to buy Christmas gifts.
- What can we do to bring joy to those kids who are less fortunate than us?
- We can be Santa's little helpers this year. How? We can ask our families to collect a few toys, but we will need to collect many more toys.



**"WHATEVER WE DO TO THE SMALLEST
AND THE LEAST, WE DO TO HIM."**

OUR CALL TO SERVE

Let's try to collect enough toys to cover the length of a whole block (street). We can also join with other local Conquest teams to reach our goal and then distribute them to little boys and girls in need.

We can make a goal in measurement of the toys (laid end to end), for how many toys we want to collect. 100 feet? 200 feet? 400 feet? A whopping 1000 feet?

PROJECT OVERVIEW

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WEEK	STEPS	WEEKLY THEME
1	<p>Get Permission: Decide on a location and ask for the needed permissions.</p> <p>Design: The boys need to design some promotional material (flyers, posters, etc.) which can be approved next week.</p>	
2	<p>Make Contact: Full steam with promotion: you should approach possible sources for promo including local media (radio, newspaper, and TV), Churches, and the stores near where the event will be held.</p> <p>Convince: The boys should get family and friends convinced of this project so that they begin promoting it as well.</p> <p>Find Out: You need to approach poor parishes or community groups to find out the kinds of gifts needed for children.</p>	
3	<p>Approach: The boys need to approach stores near where they will have the Block of Toys and see if they will donate or give discounts for toys given to the project.</p> <p>Promote: Promotion needs to continue in full swing.</p> <p>Advertise: Prepare a hand-out for the event</p>	
4	<p>Get Ready: Final logistics prep is done this week. Signs are needed for Block of Toys. Everyone should know exactly what they need to do during the event.</p> <p>Final Push: A last push on promo is done this week.</p>	

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WEEK	STEPS	WEEKLY THEME
5	<p>Toy Drive: This week begins the toy drive. It should last at least 4 hours, if not all day Saturday. If more than one team is involved, do shifts.</p> <p>Invite: This is a perfect opportunity to invite new boys to help because it's an exciting and easy event.</p> <p>Flyer: The boys need to have small hand-outs that explain the project and ask for toys, gift wrap, cards and cash.</p>	
6	<p>Toy Drive: This is the second week of the toy drive. It should also last at least 4 hours, if not all day Saturday. If more than one team is involved, do shifts.</p>	
7	<p>Wrap It: This week wrap the gifts and place a note about the Bethlehem story in each one. The toys can be distributed the upcoming weekend.</p> <p>Make Note: The gifts should be labeled what they are, but in a way that you can remove it before giving the gifts to kids.</p>	
8	<p>Distribute: The boys should distribute as many of the Christmas gifts as possible. If they are successful in the toy drive, they will have to pass them on to local parishes or community groups. This can be done on a weekend at a parish.</p>	

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TACTICS BY AREAS

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LOCATION

- Toy collection should be done in a public place; street corners, in the shopping district or in a mall or in front of a toy store. Measure out the distance of a block or street and set the goal beforehand and have periodic markers to show progress.
- The toys should be distributed in a poor district of town: either through a poor parish or a community organization. Dads are great to help with planning and contacting the locations.

PROVISIONS

- You need to wear your Conquest shirts when you collect toys to look professional and unified.
- Promotional materials: Make a flyer that explains your event that can be given to media, Churches or stores to promote it. You need to make posters to put up in Churches and miniature flyers (business card size or quarter page is sufficient) which you can hand out.
- Hand-out: each person you see when you are doing the Block of Toys needs to receive a hand-out that explains who you are, what you are doing, and how they can help (including specific toys to give or age ranges).
- Choose a boy to write out the story of Bethlehem then makes lots of copies. You should hand these out to people who donate a gift and then actually place one in each gift while wrapping.
- Boxes: You will need several large boxes to collect the gifts.
- Goal Poster: You can create a simple poster showing the total length of an average street or block (perhaps 1000 feet). Each donated toy is measured, and then the poster updated periodically for the boys and people to see progress.

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TACTICS BY AREAS



RESPONSIBILITIES

- The team leader (with the help of a dad) should try to ask permission for the place himself before the project starts so as to give the boys a clear visual of what the final project will look like.
- The adult volunteer should ensure that on the 5th and 6th week of the project, there are rides arranged by carpool for everyone with space for all the toys.
- Individual boys need to prepare the promotional material: A goal poster, flyers, small handouts, and the Bethlehem story.
- Each boy should have at least one group that he is responsible for informing of this event; if he doesn't tell them, they will not know.
- One boy who is very cordial should be in communication with the pastor or parish secretary where you will do the block of toys to make sure both sides are expecting the same event.
- Someone needs to try to inform the media, and be responsible for taking pictures and writing up a short story. They should also send these to the Conquest National Office at the end of the event to get it on the national website.
- A boy or two should be responsible for some provisions, such as tables, chairs, and empty boxes to bring to the event.

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CONTACTS

- **Store or mall managers:** You need to show that you are professional. You need to show how this is good for their business: you will get stuff off their shelves and make them look good with little effort on their part. Offering a discount will make them look even better. They will be encouraged if they know you are going to inform the media as that helps them out.
- **Local media:** You need to show how this event will really help out people as they usually are looking for such stories around Christmas. Try to get them to announce it before rather than mention it after.
Churches and community groups: They are usually pretty good. Sometimes they are doing something similar so you can modify things a little bit and work together. If they are going to connect you with poor people, they need to see that you will be discrete about it and that you will report back to them; they will probably see how the boys benefit from distributing not just collecting presents but you may have to explain this.
- **People on the street:** On the day of the Block of Toys the boys need to approach everyone without distinction. Sob stories about poor kids without gifts can be helpful but make sure the overall message is always positive. They should be examples of Christ to all whom they speak with. It is important that they practice what they are going to say before the event.

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DEBRIEFING

SPECIAL OPS

- The boys need to be praying and sacrificing for the poor kids. They should sacrifice some of their own money to buy a present or two.
- You need to collect new, clean, unopened toys. Very few kids would be excited about an old stuffed animal or a G.I. Joe missing an arm, and most community groups will not accept gifts like this.
- Location, location, location: if you are set up in the middle of a mall, you will probably get a lot of toys, even if no previous promotion was done.
- The boys need to be excited and smiling at the Block of Toys, so people will be encouraged to offer toys.
- Go outside Catholic structures because it is better if the Block of Toys is simply a charitable event. People will hesitate to give if it is too overtly Catholic, but don't hide the fact that Conquest is a Catholic boys club.
- If the boys have gone to help these kids before they will be more deeply impacted by their experience of their Christmas celebration.

CONTINGENCY PLAN



- A whole Block would require several teams collaborating. If your team is alone, try the football field of toys which is 100 yards long. Work together with a team doing the "Uncle Scrooge's Christmas" which is a similar apostolic project option.
- Other ways besides length can be used to measure the number of toys collected such as parking a container truck in front of a toy store and filling it. Boys like measurement though, so avoid having a toy drive without a specific target quantity, but try to make it realistic.
- A similar strategy could be used to collect items for a home for unwed mothers in a "Block of Diapers" project. Be creative!

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PROJECT NOTES: