Press Release

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Fort Drum NCOs march on a mission to deliver a Mountain of Toys

FORT DRUM, N.Y. -- More than 300 noncommissioned officers led a foot march across post on Dec. 5 with a singular mission.

It wasn’t about recording a fast time (it took about 42 minutes) or achieving a long distance (a little over five miles).

It was about delivering a “Mountain of Toys.”

The annual Mountain of Toys campaign is a longstanding tradition at Fort Drum, organized through the Sergeants Major Association over the past 27 years to provide children with one more gift this holiday season.

This is the second year that a group of senior NCOs delivered a trailer full of toys from the Command Sgt. Maj. Southern “Buddy” Hewitt Noncommissioned Officer Academy. When they reached their destination at the USO, the Soldiers formed a line from the parking lot to inside the facility to get all the toys inside.

“This means a lot to the NCOs who participated today, and all the (NCOA) classes who donated to the program and continue to do so,” said Command Sgt. Maj. Ronald Newman, NCOA commandant. “The turnout this morning was incredible – easily twice as many NCOs than before.”

Newman said that the goal was to collect enough toys and donations to support more than 900 families, and after toys from other collection sites on post are gathered, he believes they will be successful.

“I feel confident we will hit our goal,” he said. “A special thanks goes out to all who graciously donated. This means the world to the young children in our community who are so deserving of this support.”

Command Sgt. Maj. Nema Mobarakzadeh, 10th Mountain Division (LI) and Fort Drum senior enlisted adviser, commended the NCOs for participating in the toy drive and for their year-round commitment to taking care of Soldiers and families.

“This is what we do as noncommissioned officers – take care of Soldiers and take care of the formation to get the mission done, and make sure they have what they need to set them up for success,” he said. “There are, unfortunately, Soldiers in the formation that are going through some difficult times, financially. So for you to give your hard-earned money so that these families can enjoy Christmas says a lot about your character and how you live the Army values.”

Joining the morning’s ruck march was retired Command Sgt. Maj. Joe McLaughlin, who has been involved in the holiday campaign since its start.

“We’ve been doing this for many years now, and it just shows how much people are willing to support those who might be needing a little help this holiday season,” he said. “That’s always been the idea behind it. And if we could include an NCO road march to build camaraderie and support our Soldiers at the same time, then I think it is worth our time and effort.”

McLaughlin also oversees the Adopt a 10th Mountain Platoon program at Fort Drum, which enables community members, businesses and organizations to send letters and care packages to 10th Mountain Division units deployed overseas.

“We adopted the entire 1st Brigade Combat Team, which is forward deployed right now,” he said. “That’s 120 platoons with 120 sponsors developing great relationships with all our deployed Soldiers, sending all kinds of goodies to them. As our 1st Brigade Combat Team comes back home, we’re winding that down and we’re standing by for the next deployment. We’ve had great support from the units and from our sponsors, which includes schools, businesses, VFWs and American Legions in the communities around Fort Drum.”

Photos from the morning Mountain of Toys foot march are available at [www.flickr.com/photos/drum10thmountain/albums/72177720304229409](http://www.flickr.com/photos/drum10thmountain/albums/72177720304229409).

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Photo caption: More than 300 noncommissioned officers led a foot march from the Command Sgt. Maj. Southern “Buddy” Hewitt Noncommissioned Officer Academy to the USO facility Dec. 5 in support of the annual Mountain of Toys campaign. The toy drive is in its 27th year at Fort Drum, and this year’s goal is to provide an additional toy to more than 900 families this holiday season. (Photo by Mike Strasser, Fort Drum Garrison Public Affairs)