

# 'Giving Back at Christmas'

## VFW members host local toy drive

Jan 19, 2023

VFW Post 7248 members in Sparta, New Jersey, welcomed more than 160 visitors to their hall in support of the second annual Frankie's Toy Drive on Dec. 11.

The event, named after 5-year-old Frankie Volpe, who at four months old was diagnosed with a rare form of cancer called Langerhan Cell Histiocytosis (LCH), helped collect more than 200 unwrapped gifts for a Christmas donation to the Ronald McDonald House in Philadelphia.

"I have been very lucky to have Frankie home with our family during the holidays, but not all the children we see are that lucky," said Alicia Volpe, Frankie's mom and toy drive founder. "Because our family goes through so much, the way we get through it is giving back at Christmas."

Volpe began running the toy drive in 2021 but seeing a large community response to the event prompted them to seek a larger venue for their second annual event this year.

When a friend of the family, Heather Tanner, insisted on reaching out to the local VFW, Volpe contacted Post 7248 Commander Pete Litchfield, who agreed to help the family run the event at the Post's event hall.

"They were amazing," Volpe said. "Pete is one of the most thoughtful people, and he went over and above for my son's toy drive event," Volpe said. "Without their support we would not have been able to do this."

The event at Post 7248 provided local children and their families with all the comforts of the Christmas spirit, from hot chocolate and homemade cookies to homemade confections and photos with Santa, as well as arts and crafts and local vendors providing food and drinks.

The success of the event left Volpe thanking Litchfield and others at Post 7248 for their gracious support in running her son's toy drive.

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“It was such a success that we are already planning our next toy drive next year,” Volpe said.