



## ***News Release***

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### **Saving Christmas for Puerto Rico**

***Toy companies, suppliers and supporters are bringing gifts to the island;  
Website and Facebook encourage private citizens to help, too***

**LOS ANGELES – November 15, 2017** – With more than 400,000 children under the age of 10 in Puerto Rico and only 35% of the island with electricity, Santa will face tremendous challenges this year.

“While everyone is appropriately focusing on food, water and services, parents have little if any time or money for Christmas,” said Ruth Cruz, Friends of Puerto Rico (FPR), Toy Drive Task Force Leader. “We want to step in so that every child on the island knows that while everything may be hard right now, Santa remembers them. We feel this is crucial to the morale of children and families, and we want to be able to help.”

The idea was proposed by Woody Browne, owner of licensing and marketing firm Building Q, who has for decades helped toy and juvenile products manufacturers acquire licenses for their products. Touching on his contacts from across the industry, he has been able to help secure thousands of new toys for donation.

“The response has been amazing,” said Browne. “Literally everyone we have called has said ‘We’re in, tell us what to do.’ It’s been one of the most exhausting but important things I have been a part of.”

It’s been “exhausting” because of the timeline. The group, guided by FPR, have had just 45 days to pull off a Christmas miracle.

“Woody came to us at the start of November, and we need to have every toy shipped and in the hands of parents by December 15,” said Cruz. “The toy companies are being extremely generous, and now we are expanding our efforts and seeking support from companies in the sporting goods and juvenile products industries.

Cruz added, “The our-pouring of support from individuals has been amazing as well. We have established a website for donations to help defray the costs of shipping from the mainland (<http://www.friendsofpuertorico.org/christmas/toydrive>) and a Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/friendsofpuertorico/>) where people can follow along on our journey.”

FPR has been working to arrange warehouse and shipping details in Ponce, PR from where the toys will be distributed. When the toys arrive in Puerto Rico, they will be stored and sorted at a warehouse donated by FPR. Centros Sor Isolina Ferré, The Boys and Girls Club and several faith-based organizations will manage the distribution.

“These donations are literally saving Christmas for families across our island,” said Lourdes Lopez Maldonado, Centros Sor Isolina Ferré. “During a time when so many have so little, we believe this is more than a toy drive – it is, in its own way, a miracle. It is a show of Christmas spirit that will mean so much to so many in Puerto Rico. It is so important for children to feel that Santa has not forgotten them.”

#### **About Friends of Puerto Rico**

Friends of Puerto Rico (FPR) was formed in 2015 as a 501(c)(3) organization and is the leader in raising funds and reinvesting in communities on the island under the banner #BuildPuertoRico.

IN 2017, FPR launched the [Hurricane Maria Recovery Fund](#) which allows individuals to make donations to help rebuild Puerto Rico from the impact of Hurricane Maria, the most devastating storm to hit the Island in over a century.

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