



March/April  
2010

Volume 1 - Edition 2



## Toy Loan & Volunteer Services Newsletter

Lena Gutierrez—Bureau Director  
Amy Alvarado—Division Chief  
Marcia Benitez—Director

### Director's Corner



The Toy Loan & Volunteer Services Section is now under the Bureau of Administrative Services, General Services Division. We are pleased to join Director, Lena Gutierrez and Chief, Amy Alvarado as part of their extended "family". 2010 has already proven to be very exciting for the Toy Loan Program. The Toy Loan Program has been selected by Woman In Film for a distinguished public service announcement grant. We will have a public service announcement developed by the Woman In Film Members. Each year the Hollywood based Woman In Film agency selects a handful of non-profit agencies for this esteemed award. We are humbled and grateful for this honor. A special thank you to County Cable Channel correspondent Heather Armstrong and her cameraman Brent as they did an outstanding job on the County Cable Channel news story on Toy Loan. Please tune in to the County Cable Channel to see the news story which will air throughout March 2010. We have announced the issuance of Toy Loan borrower cards to all of our Toy Loan members. The cards will be issued this summer. The card design will be provided by one of our artistic and talented Toy Loan borrowers. We are currently recruiting volunteers for the LA Marathon on March 21, 2010, and Cesar Chavez Community Service Week March 29, 2010 through April 2, 2010. Please call Rafael Navarro (213) 744-4348 if you are interested in volunteering. More information will be provided regarding our special May 2010 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration to honor the Toy Loan borrowers. Special events and toy giveaways are planned!

### Volunteer of the Year

The Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors honors an adult and a youth volunteer from each Department each year. This year, we are privileged to honor Ron Crockett, Toy Loan Advisory Board Treasurer as the Adult Volunteer of the Year, and Melanie Powers, daughter of DPSS employee Vanessa Powers, as the Youth Volunteer of the Year.



### Coach Ron Crockett, Adult Volunteer of the Year

Ron Crockett, better known as "Coach Ron", has been the Toyrarian for the Fun Zone Toy Loan Center, located at the Huntington Hotel in Downtown L.A.'s skid row, since August 2008. Coach Ron jumped at the opportunity to bring toys and the Toy Loan Honor Code to all the children living on skid row in temporary and transitional housing. His enthusiasm for the children at the center, as well as the program itself is completely infectious and enjoyed by all those who around him.

### Melanie Powers, Youth Volunteer of the Year

Melanie Powers is an exceptional and positive individual. As a volunteer for DPSS General Services Division - Materials Management Section, she is often in charge of the office Country Store. Her friendly customer service and cheery smile keep employees coming back and buying more. When asked to help with other tasks and learn new computer programs or office machines, she never hesitates. Melanie's future plans are to attend a Division I University to continue with her passion: running cross country and track. She has participated in the prestigious Stanford Invitational, Laguna Hills Invitational, Woodbridge Irvine Invitational, Central Park Huntington Beach Invitational, Mount San Antonio Invitational Champion and the Pacific Coast League MVP and League Champion. She has been offered full scholarships to High Point University in North Carolina, UC Santa Barbara and UC Davis. Two recruiters mentioned that they are offering full scholarships not only for her running ability, but her character as well, which they have been able to see each Wednesday night at their scheduled recruiting calls.

Congratulations Ron and Melanie on providing outstanding volunteer service to the community!

**Toy Loan**  
 Celebrating 75 years of service to Los Angeles County!  
 A free service provided by the County of Los Angeles that allows children to borrow toys, just like checking out books from a library!  
 FREE pick-up from your home or business available. Toy Loan Centers (to borrow or donate) are located throughout LA County. To find your nearest location: <http://dpsa.lacounty.gov/dpsa/toyloan/default.cfm> (213) 744-4344  
 Thank you to our proud sponsors:  
 BORDERS, FirstCity, KOLE, MidsArt, and others.  
 Operated by the Los Angeles County Department of Public Social Services  
 Donate your new or gently used toys!

## Toy Safety Tips

Toys are the treasures of childhood, as long as they're chosen with care. But are toys really hazardous? You may want to observe these guidelines when choosing toys, and share them with anyone who may be buying gifts for your children.

- **Is it suited to your child's developmental level?** Most toys bear a "recommended age" sticker, which should be taken as a starting point in the selection process. Be realistic about your child's abilities and level of maturity when choosing an age-appropriate toy. Toys that have projectiles, for example, are never suitable for a child under age 4 – and even some 6-year-olds aren't mature enough to handle them. Likewise, if your 3-year old still puts everything into his mouth, continue to steer clear of toys and games with small parts and pieces.
- **Think big.** Until your child turns 3, toy parts should be bigger than his mouth to avoid the possibility of choking. To determine whether a toy poses a choking risk, try fitting it through a toilet paper roll. If a toy or part of a toy can fit inside the cylinder, it's not safe.
- **Look for toys that are well put together.** Make sure tails are securely sewn, seams of stuffed animals are reinforced, and paint is not peeling. Stuffed animals should also be free of buttons, yarn, ribbons, and anything else your child could yank off and put in his mouth.
- **Is the toy in good condition?** Used toys passed down from older relatives or siblings or bought at yard sales can be worn or frayed, which can be sometimes pose a danger. Examine all new or used toys for buttons, batteries, ribbons, eyes, beads, and plastic appendages that could easily be chewed or snapped off.
- **Does the toy have a string or cord longer than 12 inches?** A cord can too easily be wrapped around a young child's neck, causing strangulation.



# Volunteer Opportunity

## Sunday, March 21, 2010

From 7:00 am to 2:30 pm

On-line registration for athletes and volunteers must be done at <http://lamarathon.com>.

Volunteer Group Name: **LA County DPSS**

Password: **dpss**

Volunteers must register on-line to receive a t-shirt the day of the event.

Questions? Call Rafael Navarro, Volunteer Coordinator (213) 744-4348 or [rafaelnavarro@dpss.lacounty.gov](mailto:rafaelnavarro@dpss.lacounty.gov).

*See you at the race!*  
Your participation is strictly voluntary and greatly appreciated.



### Toy Loan History

Toy Loan is proud to celebrate its 75th anniversary this year and we thought it would be a good idea to refresh everyone's memory of the Toy Loan History, the way it all began:

Its formation began in the summer of 1934 during the "Great Depression"—the worst economic times in the history of the United States. The manager of a dime store in Southwest Los Angeles noticed two young boys, eight and nine years old, wandering around the store. After observing them for several days, he became aware they were pocketing small toys and materials that they could use to construct toys of their own. Amazingly, spools with the thread removed became wheels for little home made wooden cars. The manager apprehended the children, and sought the counsel of Mrs. Gertrude Peddie, principal of the school the boys attended, and found that their records were good. She explained, "These are good children from fine homes but because of the Depression their parents are unable to provide toys that are necessities to the development of children." Together, the store manager, school principal and Probation staff developed an outstanding plan that did not require funds. And from this the Toy Loan Program was born.

### Upcoming Events

Johnson High School Toy Loan Grand Opening	Mar 9
City of L.A. Marathon 	Mar 21
Cesar Chavez Volunteer Week	Mar 29-Apr 2
TLAB Meeting	Mar 25
Toy Loan's 75th Anniversary Appreciation Breakfast 	Apr 8
Volunteer of the Year Luncheon	Apr 12
Remembering Our Veterans	May 29

### We Want To Hear From You!

If you have topics of interest for publication in this newsletter, please contact us at (213) 744-4344 or via email at [toyloan@dpss.lacounty.gov](mailto:toyloan@dpss.lacounty.gov)