



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

December 17, 2015

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In Addition to Nearly 1,000 Toys & Coats, Catholic Charities Receives Surprise Gift from Empire City Casino President at Ninth Annual Coat and Toy Drive Donation Will Assist Hundreds of Families & Children in Need this Holiday Season

Westchester, New York – Christmas came early at Empire City Casino with the presentation to **Catholic Charities** of nearly one thousand toys and coats collected during the casino's **Ninth Annual "Christmas Spirit" Toy and Coat Drive**. The donations will ensure that New Yorkers in need have a warm coat this winter and a toy or two to put under the Christmas tree for their children.

Timothy J. Rooney, president and CEO of Empire City Casino, presented the annual donation to **Monsignor Kevin Sullivan**, executive director of **Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of New York** but also surprised the service organization with a surprise gift...a donation of **\$10,000** to assist them in continuing to provide vital services to New York families in need.

This year's "Christmas Spirit" Toy and Coat Drive began November 9th and generous donors have given over 600 toys and more than four hundred coats. The toys and coats will be distributed through Catholic Charities community agencies to families in need. The toy and coat drive has become a holiday tradition at Empire City Casino and thousands of toys and coats have been donated since 2007 when the campaign was first launched.

Joining Rooney and Monsignor Sullivan were **Westchester County Executive Rob Astorino**, **Senator Andrea Stewart-Cousins**, **Assemblymember Shelley Mayer**, **Yonkers Mayor Mike Spano** and **City Council Member Corazon Pineda**. **Esmeralda Hoscoy**, regional supervisor of **Westchester County Catholic Charities Community Services**, and **Órla Kelleher**, executive director of the **Aisling Irish Community Center** were also present and will help ensure the toys and coats get into the hands of families most in need.

The drive to help families in our communities attracted some West Coast warmth. **Josh Blake**, president of California-based and family-owned company, **Jams**, donated hundreds of toys to the annual drive. This is the fourth consecutive year that Blake and his family have showered New Yorkers with their generosity. In previous years, Blake even made the trip to New York to present the toys in person.

Another annual key contributor to the effort is **John Lennon**, owner of Yonkers-based **Smart Move & Storage**, who generously donates his company's services to transport and store of all donations while they are distributed by local community organizations.

"Social responsibility is not just for corporations, it is imperative we all do what we can," said Rooney. "Giving back is about community and helping others move forward. There are no greater deeds than charity and service."

"Once again we are fortunate, through the generosity of Tim Rooney and the Empire City Casino family for this donation of toys and coats that will benefit some of the more vulnerable families that we work with in the City of Yonkers and beyond," said Monsignor Sullivan. "In this Christmas season we are grateful that this spirit of generosity and caring enables Catholic Charities to provide help and new hope in the lives of Non-Catholics and Catholics alike whom we serve."

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Catholic Charities Receives Toys, Coats and \$10K Donation from Empire City

"This is what the holidays are all about – neighbors helping neighbors," said Astorino. "I join in thanking Empire City Casino and all those who donated to this year's toy and coat drive. You are helping to put a smile on a child's face, and helping to keep someone warm this winter. Nothing could be more important this time of year."

"The holiday season is not about what we hope to receive in gifts but rather how we can give of ourselves to benefit others in our community," said Spano. "The annual toy and coat drive, hosted by our generous and supportive partners at Empire City Casino, is one example among many of Yonkers uniting together in generosity and service during the season of giving. I want to thank Tim Rooney, Jr. and the entire team at Empire City Casino for their continued commitment to Yonkers."

"Each year for the past nine years Empire City Casino at Yonkers Raceway has worked with Catholic Charities to make the holiday season a bit better for Westchester families in need," said Mayer. "There are so many families here in Westchester that struggle all year long, and the holidays can be particularly difficult. Empire City has always been a strong community partner, and I applaud them for continuing to give back."

"Aisling Irish Community Center is delighted to be chosen again this year as a recipient of Empire City Casino's annual coat and toy drive," said Kelleher. "Aisling Irish Community Center is widely recognized as a resource and respite center in Yonkers. We provide programs and services for the more vulnerable people in our community, i.e. seniors, low income families, homeless, etc. Empire City Casino's generous contribution to our holiday appeal is welcomed with open arms by Aisling Irish Community Center as well as by all the grateful recipients."

About Empire City Casino at Yonkers Raceway:

Empire City Casino, one of the largest entertainment and gaming destinations in the northeast, features 5,300 of the hottest slots, electronic blackjack, three card poker, craps, roulette, baccarat and sic bo; year-round harness racing & International simulcasting; live entertainment including the best party, tribute and Latin bands, comedy, & more. A plethora of dining options will satisfy even the most discerning palate with Italian cuisine at *Nonno's Trattoria*; trackside dining with live betting at *Empire Terrace Restaurant*; and convenient delicious options at the International Food Court or Lil' Cocina. A new \$50 million expansion added *Dan Rooney's*, a high-energy sports bar, and *Alley 810*, a craft cocktail lounge rounds out the entertainment options with retro bowling lanes. Empire City Casino at Yonkers Raceway is located at 810 Yonkers Avenue (off I-87 at Central Avenue) Yonkers, NY, Westchester County, open seven days a week from 10:00am to 6:00am. Visit www.empirecitycasino.com or call 914.968.4200 for information.

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