



Vallarta

*Por la sorpresa de los niños...*

## TOYS FOR TOTS DELIVERS CHILDREN'S DAY GIFTS TO KIDS OF PRISON INMATES

By: Jerry Lafferty



Joy came to the faces of families and children of inmates at the State Prison near Ixtapa. The inauguration of two new playgrounds on prison grounds was held on Saturday morning, May 1. In attendance were representatives of the Navy League and Marriott CasaMagna Resort, who organize the annual Toys for Tots program in Puerto Vallarta, as well as Prison officials and representatives from the Jalisco Governor's Office in Puerto Vallarta. The funding of the new playgrounds was mostly provided by the State of Jalisco, who for the past 3 years has provided significant grants to Toys for Tot Vallarta.



The new playgrounds at the prison site had been sorely needed. Every Saturday and Sunday, and on some weekdays, 1000's of family members visit the roughly 1,000 prisoners housed at the penitentiary. Included are 100's of kids who until now have had nowhere to play and otherwise work off excess energy during the up to 8 hours visits. This has negatively affected the quality of family visits, and not been fair to the kids. The State of Jalisco and Prison officials clearly recognized the need, and a few months ago asked Toys for Tots to help in alleviating the problem. Fortunately, Toys for Tots had 2 playground sets waiting in the wings for a good site to be identified. Talk about good karma!



The playgrounds were installed by Toys for Tots over a 3 day period with the assistance of 10 inmates. One was installed in the men's wing of the prison, and the other in the women's wing. On the Saturday of inauguration, children entered the prison yards not knowing a big surprise was awaiting them. The screams of joy and wide eyes told the story, as dozens of kids rushed to the play sets to "officially" inaugurate their new gifts. By the time the Navy League and other guests were departing the scene, the playgrounds were literally being swarmed by kids, much to the delight of the Navy League and Marriott, as well as prison officials and State representatives. A big win-win for all involved. It turned out to be every bit as exciting and rewarding as the delivery of 10,000+ toys throughout the Bahia at Christmas time.



Particular thanks for making this project happen go to Fred Piontkowski, Bill Clark, Laura Joachin, Carol Smith and John Moore of the Navy League; Lourdes Bizarro, Public Relations Director of the Marriott; Ing. Armando Plata Cuellar, Warden of the State Prison; and Jose Maria Ibarria and Sra. Graciela Munoz of the Jalisco State Governor's Office.



Toys for Tots is a charitable activity organized and supported by the Navy League, Marriott, Vista Vallarta Golf Club, Coldwell Banker/La Costa Real Estate, Toyota, and many other local businesses and individuals. To get involved, you can contact Bill Clark, President of the local Navy League Council, at [clarkbill@earthlink.net](mailto:clarkbill@earthlink.net). All are welcome – no prior military service is required. You won't find a more rewarding way to give back to the less advantaged people of Puerto Vallarta.

More about Navy League [www.vallartanavyleague.org/  
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