



# ToyMakers of East Lake

"Making Smiles One Toy at a Time"



## Toy Stories

Summer 2016 by Dan Pearch

Some of our friends are unaware that, as a part of ToyMakers of East Lake, we also operate a bicycle ministry! Most of our bicycle "crew" consists of middle and high school students who are taught and supervised by a core group of experienced adult mechanics. Trevor Charlton, pictured below, is the founder of the group.



We receive donated bicycles of all sizes and condition, mechanically refurbish them, and then put those bicycles into the hands of needy children and adults. Often, it's the only way these children would have their own bicycle. For many adults, a reliable bicycle can make the difference in them being able to access meaningful employment. We are especially pleased to partner with a number of organizations and agencies that serve Veterans, to insure that their needs for a bicycle are met.

The bicycles we receive come from various sources. Local kids (thanks Moms & Dads for teaching generosity and community service) donate the bikes they have outgrown. Many youth and adults "upgrade" and donate their used bikes, and many others come from our local county-wide transit authority. These are bicycles that have been left on busses and at bus stops, and have remained unclaimed.

For donated bicycles that are beyond repair, their usable parts are salvaged, and those parts are subsequently used to rebuild other bicycles.

ToyMakers of East Lake provides meaningful volunteer opportunities and much more... We know that the volunteers at ToyMakers are like one big family. But did you know that, within this group, there are numerous husband/wife teams? We also have brothers, sisters, mother/daughter, mother/son, father/son, and father/daughter combinations. To top it all, we have grandparents volunteering with their grandchildren. For example, Bill Firth is one of our skilled wheel assemblers for toys, while his grandson Jack works with the bicycle ministry. Jack is a student in the Engineering program at Eastlake Middle School. Family participation helps bring ToyMakers and their families closer together.

Most of our seasonal volunteers have headed back north for the summer. Some of our student volunteers will be working summer jobs and continuing to volunteer. Others will be preparing to leave for college. From those of us who remain "on the job", it has been a pleasure to work alongside and get to know you! Have a great summer! We look forward to seeing you in the fall or during your time off from work and college.

### Partner Profile

The Publix Super Markets store in the Brooker Creek shopping center is the workplace "home" to a group of dedicated ToyMakers volunteers. One day each month this group arrives at our workshop, on their own time, to help build toys that they know will make a difference in a child's life. Cherri Tutko is the coordinator of this group. She explained that during each new associate's orientation to the store, they are informed about this outreach opportunity. The Publix volunteers range in age from early 20's to mid-50's, and they find these off-site sessions to be a positive team-building experience. Cherri emphasizes that the ultimate reward for the hours spent at ToyMakers comes when they are able to go along for the delivery of toys to the various agencies and facilities. At times,



ToyMakers are able to interact with some of the children who will be receiving a toy, and we can see first-hand how a simple wooden toy can produce smiles! This group of Publix associates exemplifies the long-standing tradition established by the founder of Publix, Mr. George Jenkins; a spirit of giving back to the community.