FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: October 31, 2022

**Firefighters Local 1348 Launch Annual Toys for Tots Drive**

Decades ago, a Christmas Eve fire left a local Muncie family devastated. 4 members of the local Firefighters union stepped up to provide Christmas for the family, and the Muncie Toys for Tots program was born. Today, the program provides toys for 700 to 1,000 children every year.

The program, staffed entirely by volunteers, collects new and gently used toys year round. Families are eligible to participate based on qualification for federal assistance programs, and can sign up through the Salvation Army on Wheeling Avenue. Toys for Tots serves children ages 0-12, although when there are donations for older children, the program is occasionally able to serve up to age 16. The public is encouraged to drop off donations at any of the City fire stations between 9 and 6, any day of the week. Donations are taken to the old Career Center on Elgin Road, where volunteers sort through the toys, clean them, and fix any toys that need repair.

In addition to their partnership with the Salvation Army, the fire department has also recently partnered with Meridian Health Services and the Department of Child Services to expand outreach in the community. Toys for Tots will be holding their annual bowling fundraiser at Munsee Lanes on December 10th, with the goal to recruit 40 5-person teams at $50 per team. All funds raised to directly towards supporting the program. “Our goal this year is to make sure there is not a child that goes without something for Christmas,” remarked firefighter Kevin Gibson.

Families in need of Christmas toys can sign up at the Salvation Army on November 1-4 and 8-11. Sign ups are from 10 am to noon and 1 pm to 3:30, with extended hours on Tuesdays up to 7 pm. Families will need to bring proof of income, proof of bills, a State issued photo ID, Social Security Cards, food stamps if applicable, and birth certificates of anyone under 12 years old. Appointments are not required, and families will be signed up on a first come, first served basis.