

# Come Join the fun at The ToyMakers of East Lake's Open House & Silent Auction!

Published on 9 October 2015 in [Events \(/en/east\\_lake\\_issue\\_10\\_15/events/\)](/en/east_lake_issue_10_15/events/)

[Julie Kanehl](#) (author)

Location(s): Toymakers of East Lake



Bob and Janet Helms and the ToyMakers of East Lake enjoy making a difference for children.

Mark your calendars, and spend the morning with The ToyMakers of East Lake on Saturday, November 7th, for they will be hosting an Open House and Silent Auction at the East Lake United Methodist Church just off of East Lake Road. Free and open to the public, please feel free to bring the entire family, including the little ones who will receive one of the Toy- Makers famous handmade toys! The Open House includes a tour of their recently expanded toy making workshop, which is usually closed to the public, as well as an opportunity to get to know the many amazing volunteers who have turned their handiwork into good works. Everyone will enjoy the silent auction,

which will include everything from one-of-a-kind, handmade items, to gift certificates to local businesses and tickets to Florida attractions! It's also the perfect place to check off some of the items on your Christmas list, because by participating in this awesome auction, you're giving

back to a non-profit organization whose “soul” purpose is to give to the children in our community.

ToyMakers had humble beginnings, as most matters of the heart do, and was started by a group of people in Pasco County who made simple wooden toys out of their garages and gave them to local agencies and hospitals, with the purpose of helping children who could use a smile.

In 2007, ToyMakers of Eastlake was founded as an outreach program by The East Lake United Methodist Church, who saw the light and the love in the mission, and donated some space adjacent to the church so that these volunteers could have a place to call their own.

Since 1982, more than 400,000 toys have been delivered to local children in need in Pinellas, Pasco, Hillsborough, and even Alachua counties. Delivering to hospitals such as All Children’s Hospital, Tampa General, Shriner’s Hospital in Tampa, and Ronald McDonald Houses, just to name a few, these toys have stories to tell, and a dozen kind hands have helped each toy find its special child. Reaching far beyond Florida, toys have been delivered to children as far away as Mexico, the Caribbean and South America in the aftermath of disasters, and are often delivered to local fire departments and first responders, who really appreciate having something to give to children when they are in a crisis.

Erica Wiedemann recently said, “I got a tour of the ToyMakers of Eastlake’s workshop today... So many volunteers work to make and paint the great wooden toys. I thank the ToyMakers for supporting The Haven of RCS and making the children happy. Also, there are fabulous volunteers who remake bikes for children and adults.”

A third ministry is their bicycle program. ToyMakers of East Lake accepts used bicycles and refurbishes them! Once the bicycles are lovingly fixed, they are given to people in need- both children and adults! Working with local schools and other charitable organizations such as agencies assisting homeless working adults, they even help send used and refurbished bicycles to Haiti and other areas in need after a crisis, so that those people can get work and provide for their families.

Current President of the Toy- Makers of East Lake Board, Bob Helms, is like many of the volunteers who thought they’d come by one Saturday a month, but fell in love with the mission, and in doing so, his wife, Janet, joined the cause as well! Today they are both on the Board, hoping to help lead ToyMakers of East Lake to help even more people. By raising awareness for

their mission, and by taking donations from local businesses for their upcoming silent auction, the Helms and the other volunteers at The ToyMakers of East Lake have one goal: To bring smiles to children.

When you come to the Open House and Silent Auction, on the morning of November 7th, you'll have the opportunity to see the new addition to their shop! Recently expanded to their many volunteers, the community came together beautifully to help ToyMakers build the additional space they needed. They needed it because they've been super busy! Bob says, "The Toymakers of East Lake organization now has over 200 volunteers and made over 10,000 toys just last year."

## Volunteer! You Can Make Toys Too!

Over the years, men and women of all ages have enjoyed volunteering at ToyMakers of East Lake. While the machinery that has been donated over the years by volunteers and local organizations is quite impressive, you don't have to know how to operate complicated machinery to help make wooden cars, helicopters, puzzles, airplanes, walking toys and more.

First: These aren't just toys. These are handmade, sanded to perfection with the purpose of protecting little fingers. These are "everything is going to be ok" toys that are lovingly painted by volunteers like you and I who want nothing more than to comfort a child. These are what the doctors, nurses, officers and first responders give to children who are scared or sad. And may I add, that they are absolutely beautiful toys. Made with love and hand-delivered to local hospitals and first responders in small batches, this non-profit organization has created something that has touched the lives of hundreds and hundreds in our area by simply doing what they love to do.

Experienced and knowledgeable in their craft, ToyMakers has learned how to take many things into consideration, from making sure that they are painted with lead-free paint (donated by Sherwin Williams), to making sure there aren't any small parts, rough parts or parts that can't be washed! Did you know that plush animals cannot be given to children at many hospitals because they cannot be easily sanitized? The toys that Toy- Makers provide, is an answer to so many prayers, and many people treasure their toys for years and years.

Bob says, "Toy Makers are people like you and me! You don't have to be able to work

complicated saws to be a volunteer here. We have one lady who really enjoys tracing patterns onto the wood, and we have other ladies who love to paint daisies on the Daisy cars.” He adds, “Whatever you can do, there’s a way you can help!”

If you’d like to volunteer, it’s easy! You can check out their website, or email them! They often have new volunteer opportunities on Saturday mornings at the shop. When you’re there, you’ll hear many of the volunteers talk about how being a ToyMaker has changed their lives, you see, for some this mission has given people a new purpose! For some, it has been having a renewed purpose after retirement, while for others it has been finding a whole group of friends they didn’t know they were there waiting to meet them.

Additionally, ToyMakers of East Lake is proud to partner with students who are part of the Florida Bright Futures Scholarship Program, which provides scholarship opportunities for students in our area who have very bright futures, but need help financially. These students need volunteer hours as part of the program, and many of the students who volunteer for ToyMakers of East Lake have found themselves coming back once their volunteer requirements have been met! They become volunteers for the love of helping others instead of just for credit!

Jim Dyer put it best when he recently said, “Great people with a great mission!”

**The ToyMakers of East Lake will hold their Open House and Silent Auction on Saturday, November 7th, 2015 from 9:30 a.m.- 12 p.m. at the East Lake United Methodist Church located at 2801 E Lake Rd S, Palm Harbor, FL. The ToyMakers of East Lake have a workshop is located at 2690 Tanglewood Trail in Palm Harbor, FL 34685, behind the East Lake United Methodist Church. If you would like to donate, sponsor or volunteer, visit their website at [www.toymakersofeastlake.org](http://www.toymakersofeastlake.org) (<http://www.toymakersofeastlake.org>) or email them at [toys@toymakersofeastlake.org](mailto:toys@toymakersofeastlake.org).**



**Like** One person likes this. [Sign Up](#) to see what your friends like.

---

## LOCATIONS

**Map (\*):**

Palm Harbor, FL

[Toymakers of East Lake](#)

[Center \(\\*\)](#)