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Big tent near I-275 is for holiday donations

By Kathy Steele



The holiday donation drop-off tent for Metropolitan Ministries -- a familiar sight along Florida Avenue every November and December -- has a new home.

A massive tent has gone up at 400 Palm Ave. on vacant land slated to become a major urban redevelopment project in Tampa Heights. The new location was needed because the nonprofit group is building 50 apartments for families who need short-term housing.

MiraclePlace, the apartment complex, is on the Florida Avenue land where the holiday tent formerly stood each year.

SoHo Capital, which owns the Palm Avenue land, offered the site as a temporary drop-off and distribution base for Metropolitan Ministries' annual food and toy giveaway.

"They were very generous in giving us this large space," said spokesman David Bledsoe. "It's very convenient to us."

The site is about five blocks from Metropolitan Ministries' headquarters at 2002 N. Florida Ave.

Construction is nearing completion, with help provided by the city of Tampa and JVS Construction.

The charity anticipates serving more than 25,000 families including more than 26,000 children this holiday season. About 10,000 volunteers help with donations and registrations.

Metropolitan Ministries this year is working with Toys 4 Tots. The charities will provide applications for each other's programs at their registration sites.

Once the tent is fully installed, donations to Metropolitan Ministries can be dropped off at the Palm Avenue location. But registrations will not be accepted there. The primary registration site, which already is taking applications, is at Springhill Park Community Center, 1000 Eskimo Ave. Other sites in Tampa are at University Area Neighborhood Service Center, 13605 N. 22nd St.; Tampa Family Health Center, 8108 N. Nebraska Ave.; and Shekinah Glory Cathedral, 1301 S. 78th St.

In Pasco County, registrations are being accepted at Pasco Metropolitan Ministries Outreach Center, 3214 U.S. Hwy. 19 in Holiday; and in Pinellas County at Taking it to the Streets, 7320 47th St. North in Pinellas Park. An additional Pinellas location will open on Nov. 5 at Together Step-by-Step, 1250 Holt Ave. in Clearwater.

For information, visit the website, www.metromin.org.
