



For Immediate Release
By: Pfc. Michelle Nash, 134th Public Affairs Detachment

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Santa and Mrs. Claus Land in Koyuk for Operation Santa Claus *Alaska National Guard bring the holiday spirit to remote Alaska village*

CAMP DENALI, Alaska— Dashing through the sky, in an Alaska Air National Guard C-130 Hercules aircraft, Santa, Mrs. Claus and a team of elves landed in Koyuk on Nov. 3.

This year marks the 53rd annual Operation Santa Claus, an Alaska National Guard program that brings the holiday spirit to remote Alaska villages with toys, fresh fruit, entertainment, ice cream sundaes and a chance to get a picture with Santa and Mrs. Claus.

“This has put everyone in a good spirit for Christmas,” said Grace Morris, a resident of Koyuk. “This is great for the kids, for the adults and the whole community.”

Approximately 300 residents of Koyuk gathered in the Koyuk Malemute School gym to commence the 2009 Holiday Season and to participate in the festivities.

“This was a great event that brought the whole community together,” said Kim Hanisch, principal of the Koyuk Malemute School. “We have community events, but I’ve never seen such a great turnout for such a positive reason.”

Operation Santa Claus not only brings a community together, but it also provides a unique and unforgettable experience.

“We assume that everyone has access to something as simple as ice cream,” said Rich Owens, owner of Tastee Freez, who donated ice cream sundaes and provided one for every resident in the village. “But for some people this is the first time they’ve ever tasted ice cream or had the presentation of building an ice cream sundae.”

Along with Koyuk, Operation Santa Claus will also visit St. George, Nondalton, Gambell, Klukwan, Pedro Bay and Kasigluk.

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Photo Cutlines:

All high resolution photos can be found at: <http://dmva.alaska.gov/gallery.htm>

Entrance

Santa and Mrs. Claus wave as they make their grand entrance to the Koyuk Malemute School gym in Koyuk, Alaska, during Operation Santa Claus on Nov. 3. Photo: Pfc. Michelle Nash, 134th Public Affairs Detachment

Group

Santa, Mrs. Claus, the team of elves and residents of Koyuk smile for quick photo before loading the sleigh, an Alaska Air National Guard C-130 Hercules aircraft. Photo: Pfc. Michelle Nash, 134th Public Affairs Detachment

Child 1 and 2

Santa and Mrs. Claus smile as they hand a gift to a child during the 53rd annual Operation Santa Claus held at the school gym in Koyuk, Alaska, on Nov. 3. Photo: Pfc. Michelle Nash, 134th Public Affairs Detachment

Ice Cream and Ice Cream2

Rich Owens, owner of Tastee Freez, and a team of elves serve ice cream sundaes to the residents of Koyuk during Operation Santa Claus on Nov. 3. Residents chose between chocolate or vanilla ice cream and toppings of caramel or chocolate syrup, whip cream, sprinkles, strawberries, nuts and a cherry. Photo: Pfc. Michelle Nash, 134th Public Affairs Detachment

Hat2

Brig. Gen. Thomas H. Katkus, acting adjutant general of the Alaska National Guard, shakes hands with Roger Nassuk Sr., a resident of Koyuk, during Operation Santa Claus on Nov. 3. Nassuk retired from the Alaska Army National as a sergeant first class after 32 years of service. Photo: Pfc. Michelle Nash, 134th Public Affairs Detachment

Piano

Mr. White Keys, a musician, plays festive holiday songs as a group of children sings along during Operation Santa Claus held at the Koyuk Malemute School gym in Koyuk, Alaska, on Nov. 3. Photo: Pfc. Michelle Nash, 134th Public Affairs Detachment

Book2

Dina Banez, right, one of Santa's elves, passes out books to students during Operation Santa Claus held at the Koyuk Malemute School gym in Koyuk, Alaska, on Nov. 3. Photo: Pfc. Michelle Nash, 134th Public Affairs Detachment

Present 2

Santa and Mrs. Claus pass a present to a Koyuk girl during Operation Santa Claus. Along with Koyuk, Operation Santa Claus will also visit St. George, Nondalton, Gambell, Klukwan, Pedro Bay and Kasigluk. Photo: Pfc. Michelle Nash, 134th Public Affairs Detachment

Apple

A Koyuk boy enjoys an apple that he was given after waiting in line to visit Santa and Mrs. Claus during Operation Santa Claus on Nov. 3. Photo: Pfc. Michelle Nash, 134th Public Affairs Detachment

Puppy

A Koyuk girl smiles as she holds her new puppy named "Flower" that she received from Santa and Mrs. Claus on Nov. 3. Photo: Pfc. Michelle Nash, 134th Public Affairs Detachment

Toys

Students from the Koyuk Malemute School smile as they proudly display the new toys that they received after standing in line to visit Santa and Mrs. Claus during Operation Santa Claus on Nov. 3. Photo: Pfc. Michelle Nash, 134th Public Affairs Detachment