NORTH RICHMOND — A call for donations of new toys and coats for students at Verde Elementary School is being made by county Supervisor John Gioia. Verde serves North Richmond, and the collection effort conducted annually by Gioia's office brings warm clothing and holiday cheer to children in one of the most impoverished neighborhoods in the Bay Area.

The goal is to collect more than 300 toys and 100 warm coats (sizes 5T to 16). Donations can be left at Gioia's district office at 11780 San Pablo Ave., Suite D, in El Cerrito.

"I hope community support will help us reach our goal of one toy for every child, and a coat for each child who needs one," Gioia said, noting that many students arrive at school without proper shoes or coats and face the prospect of getting few, if any, holiday gifts this year.

Cash or check donations are especially welcome, and they are tax deductible. Checks should be made payable to The North Richmond Neighborhood House, c/o 2008 Verde Toy and Coat Drive. Toys must be unwrapped and only new coats will be accepted for the drive. All donations must be received by noon Dec. 14 to allow time for distribution at the Verde holiday party Dec. 18. For details, call 510-374-3231.

Reach Chris Treadway at 510-262-2784.