



The spirit of giving



Class project, food drive exemplify Christmas spirit

By KIRBY NEUMANN-REA
News editor

"I feel like I'm giving back. I sometimes feel I get so much more than other people and it feels super good to give this feeling to other people."
— Sixth-grader Reed Bauer

Giving can be a lesson, and a fun one. Operation: Make A Difference completed its fifth year under teacher Tracy Norton this week.

Sixth-graders in Norton's Hood River Middle School homeroom raised money on their own, pooled it to purchase toys and gifts for needy kids, and then wrapped the presents Thursday for delivery last weekend.

"I don't know how to wrap presents," one student said. His classmates showed him how.

To raise the funds the students did lawn work, bagged horse feed, babysat, shoveled snow, sold wreaths, and helped parents at home or at work, and many other ways, in order to earn the minimum \$20 each for "Operation Make A Difference." See page B2 for details.

"We worked hard and set a goal of \$1,200 and made a little under that (\$1,121)," said one of Norton's students, Alyssa Molina. "To me it feels like I'm getting a gift to give to somebody else," she said.

The students divided up into 13 groups purchasing clothing, stockings, personal items, or toys.

"It was up to us to find what these people would need or want. We made lists but those were just the basic things we knew we should get, and if we had extra money we would get other things we thought they would like," said Reed Bauer.

Along with the FISH food drive at local schools, the Hood River Christmas Project, and other efforts of altruism, local residents of all ages got into the act of service this holiday season.

Christmas Project delivered food and gifts to 411 families and seniors on Friday and Saturday.

High school students collected the food and brought it to FISH in what is an annual culmination of the month-long food drive at Hood River Valley High School. (Donations toward the drive are still being accepted, and can be made in early January after classes reconvene.)

A total of 3,100 cans were delivered Thursday, and the high schoolers came to Mid Valley Elementary (1,200 cans) and May Street (1,490) en route to FISH food bank, where the food will be stored and distributed to families around the valley.

"Our donations are down a little this year, but many of our students are from the very families that receive help from FISH," said Principal Dennis McCauley. "Some of those kids are among those helping raise the food."

Lorinda Hoffman of Hood River FISH said they know that families that receive food often donate from their own supplies, or donate back what they might not need.

She also noted that FISH has seen a number of families enroll for help this year that might have accepted food from FISH in 2010 or 2011 but did not do so in the past year or so.

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HRMS photos by Adam Lapiere
Christmas Project photos by Kirby Neumann-Rea
HRVHS at FISH photo by Chuck Bugge

TAYLOR BEAM and Emma Buckwalter, top, hold a newly wrapped present in the "Operation Make A Difference" project.

Above, Abelardo Alvarado, Noe Torrescano and Juan Bibiano wrap a present. Counter-clockwise from left: Les Ziegenbein, Doug Asai and Kevin Asai build boxes and Shari Trout and Bill Winfield sort food at the Christmas Project sorting site; hands wrap presents; Shea Hall, Hunter Chamness and Ben Fick; HRVHS students bring food into the FISH food bank, and Madison Ramakers and Karen Villa-Justo focus on applying tape straight.



ELKS
GIVE

About 20 Elks volunteers put together gift boxes and baskets – or went “shopping” for a needy family – in the Elks ballroom and athletic area Thursday. Robert and Ruth Wymore and their son, Robo, an Oregon State University student, fill a basket, at far right. At right, Mary Hoke organizes bags of toys: stuffies, books, dolls, cars, and more. A total of 35 families received gifts courtesy of Elks and community donors. John Buckley, who has organized the drive for 28 years, said Elks works with Community Project to meet the needs of families in Hood River, Parkdale and Odell.

Photos by
Kirby Neumann-Rea



GIVING

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“Most people, if they don’t need it, they don’t ask for it,” she said. Currently 400 families are served, countywide; any eligible recipient may come to any food bank in a given week. “This really, really helps us. It’s at least a couple months’ worth of food,” said Hoffman. Kym Zannmiller of the Hood River County Christmas Project said “It’s gone

really well this year. We had ample donations and plenty of volunteers — including some young people home from college,” pointing to brother and sister Kyle and Sara Donahue, and sisters Carol and Lauren Holmson, whose father, Bruce, is the Christmas Project coordinator; a job he has done for the past five years. Meanwhile, at Elks Lodge, Robo Wymore came home from Oregon State University for winter break and helped his parents prepare gift baskets at Elks Lodge for families that receive baskets from the lodge.

Operation: Make A Difference

This is an abridged version of the letter from sixth-grader Tracy Norton to parents, explaining Operation Make A Difference: This holiday season we would like to teach our students the importance of “giving back.” What better way to do this than to have the kids participate in a project where they have the opportunity to learn firsthand what it feels like to give to someone else. Here is the plan: Each student will be required to earn a minimum of \$20 by performing community service around the house, working for friends, neighbors, etc. Once each student has earned his/her money, he/she will contribute it to our pot. We will then compile our earnings, and as a class, go shopping for needy family/families at Walmart. We will

compile a list of items the family needs/wants and the students will create a budget to determine what we can afford. Each student will be in charge of purchasing specific items. Our class will purchase items for the entire family and we will wrap the items once they are purchased. I will deliver the items at the end of the project (due to privacy issues, the name of the family/families will remain anonymous). I believe this will be a very worthwhile project for the students. Not only will they learn academic skills, but valuable life skills as well. Most importantly, the students will walk away learning the importance of “giving” to others and knowing they were part of something bigger than themselves!

Reward offered in Diamond fire

Reward offered in Diamond fire Wy’East Fire District and local, state and federal investigators are working diligently to bring the Diamond Fruit Growers fruit bin fire case to a close and are asking for the public’s help in gaining more information about the Nov. 25, blaze, according to Wy’east Fire Chief Greg Borton. A total of 10,000 plastic fruit bins, valued at about \$1.3 million, were destroyed. No one was injured in the fire, which was fought by every fire department in the Hood River valley. Neighboring homes and vehicles were damaged. “Diamond Fruit Growers

as well as many other community members suffered a great loss as a result of this large fire and many neighbors suffered damages to their residences and personal belongings as a result of the intense heat,” Borton said. Because of this, a reward of up to \$5,000 is being offered for information leading to the arrest and conviction of any person or persons involved with the Diamond Fruit Growers Bin Pile Fire. If you have any information call the fire tip hotline at 1-800-452-7888, 24 hours per day, or call the Hood River County Sheriff’s Office at 541-387-7077 and leave a message.

Order native plants now

The Hood River Soil and Water Conservation District says that in this season of giving, don’t forget about your garden. It may be buried in snow right now, but in just a few short months your yard will be ready for a new look. SWCD is taking orders now for its annual native tree and plant sale. The SWCD promises a great selection of native plant species at “fantastic prices.” Community members may choose from a variety of native conifers, deciduous trees and shrubs. These bare-root seedlings are one to two years old

and will be delivered to the SWCD in early April 2014. Visit hoodriverswcd.org to download your order form and gather information on plant descriptions and site suitability. Tree and shrub orders can be placed now by mail or phone (541-386-4588). You can also stop by the SWCD office at 3007 Experiment Station Road in Hood River, for more information or guidance when making your selection. Purchases will be available for pickup on Friday and Saturday, April 4 and 5.

Eidler and McCrea wed in Austria

Tamara Chiara Eidler and Clayton Lee McCrea, both of Hood River, were married Sept. 14, 2013, in Salzburg, Austria. The bride is the daughter of Heidi Eidler, of Hermiston, and Franz Eidler, of Wiener Neustadt, Austria. The groom is the son of Dave and Alberta McCrea, formerly of Hood River. The ceremony was held in the Marble Room at the Mirabell Palace in Salzburg, Austria, which dates back to 1606. Kim Robichaud, friend of the bride, was honor attendant, and Justina McCrea, daughter of the groom, was bridesmaid. Best man was Tyler McCrea, son of the groom. Marc Eidler, brother of the bride, was groomsman.

The couple celebrated with close family and friends following the ceremony in Salzburg. After their return to Hood River, the couple celebrated with a reception in Hood River Sept. 28. The bride is a 1996 graduate of Bundesrealgymnasium Zehnergasse in Wiener Neustadt, Austria, and received her associate degree in applied science in 2010. She works as a firefighter at Portland Fire and Rescue. The groom is a 1987 graduate of Hood River Valley High School. He works as a captain/paramedic at Hood River Fire and EMS. The couple will honeymoon in Jamaica in January and will continue to live in Hood River.



Tamara Eidler and Clayton McCrea

Submitted photo

Sumako Kobayashi celebrates 99 years

Sumako (Akiyama) Kobayashi recently celebrated her 99th birthday. She was born on Binns Hill in Hood River on Nov. 30, 1914. Florence Akiyama, who owns Nobu’s gas station on Tucker Road with her husband, Nobu, writes: “I had a party for Suma because her father and Nobu’s father were brothers. Her dad was five years older than Nobu’s dad and those two brothers were recruited by the railroad builders to bring the rail lines to the West Coast from the eastern part of the USA. “When they got here, her dad was used immediately in the desolate lands to install railway lines, as he was age 17. They told Nobu’s dad he was too young, being only 12, so he stayed in Portland with relatives



Suma Kobayashi

until he was deemed old enough to help build the tracks. “In their spare time, the boys settled in Hood River mountains where they planted fruit tree seedlings brought in their packs from Japan, some of which are now nice orchards in Oak Grove area, Hood River Valley. “At age 99, Suma still keeps busy by keeping her house very clean, raking leaves in the yard, food preparation, and arts and crafts. She is very creative with making origami and other handiwork; lucky frogs, decorative umbrellas from pretty canned food labels, etc. “Suma has a good outlook on life, goodwill for others, and makes the best of all situations, as they come up.”

Fairgrounds offers storage

The Hood River County Fairground buildings are now closed until mid-January for yearly maintenance, reports Manager Clara Rice. However, there are still some storage spaces available; call James Glen at 541-490-5293 for more information or to make arrangements.

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