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Preschoolers learn about giving back

The little ones at Sunnyside preschool are learning about the joy of giving to others during the holidays through a unique gift donation program. See page 8 for the story.

Page 8

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Area preschoolers learn about giving and compassion during holidays

JOURNAL STAFF

"Children who attend Sunnyside Preschool are learning some of life's greatest lessons; how to have compassion and empathy for others, namely other children, and that giving is very rewarding," said Cindy Petosa Brengman, the school's owner and director that has been educating 3-5 year olds at the Lake Stevens area preschool for over 16 years.

Doug Morgan, employed as a District sales manager for CarQuest has volunteered as Santa at Sunnyside for the past nine years since his own son Shawn first attended the school. He (Morgan) is everything you would imagine Santa would be; kind, gentle, patient, and of course...jolly. Even his son was unsuspecting of his identity as he named off his requests from his Christmas list while sitting on his lap.

Each year in lieu of gifts for teachers and staff during the holidays, children donate gifts to children in need through the Lake Stevens Family Support Center. Last week the children became *Santa's Helpers*, stuffing his bag many times over.

More than 80 gifts were received this year that will reach children throughout the community this holiday season. Ed Williamson from the Family Center said the needs in the community have nearly doubled since last year. "We are thrilled to continue our holiday outreach with Sunnyside Preschool again this year. Each gift means so much and the toys collected by the preschoolers will help bring joy and wonderful holiday memories to families throughout our community. We are so fortunate to have a caring community partner like Sunnyside Preschool."

The Holiday Giving Project currently underway at the center is also accepting donations that will be matched by a grant of up to \$10,000 donated by Pacific Ridge Homes.

"Our staff, the children, and their families are caring, concerned and compassionate people with a strong commit-



Contributed Photo

Santa Doug Morgan and three-year-old Lauren Schultz of Lake Stevens work together to pack a holiday bag. Children at Lake Stevens' Sunnyside Preschool help collect and prepare gifts for disadvantaged children in the community.

ment to strengthening communities by working to bring help, hope and happiness back to families of children in need," says Brengman.

Earlier this fall over 50 families participated in the school's annual celebration "Harvest from the Heart". The children sang and danced to a live performance by children's recording artist Doug Fleming Jr. as over 250 pounds of food was collected for the Lake Stevens Community Food Bank. In addition to that, nearly 100

new books were donated and given to Providence Children's Center to support literacy.

The Center serves children born with health conditions that affect their growth and development, or those facing problems stemming from illness or injury. Approximately eight 39 gallon bags full of new and gently used clothing were also donated for the KidsDream Closet located at Compass Health in Everett that provides clothing for abused and neglected chil-

dren who are in foster care in Snohomish County as well as the children and families that Compass Health serves.

At the end of each school year donations are accepted for KidsDream's "Stuff the Bus for Foster Kids" in lieu of gifts for teachers. School supplies, backpacks and monetary donations made a huge impact on the success of this program contributing to over 450 back packs distributed this year to help foster children get ready for a successful year of learning.