

When I realized this week's column was scheduled to be published on Christmas Day, I thought it would be appropriate to share just some of the many ways the students and staff in the Fairfield School District are giving back to the community during the holidays.

Our high school students were amazing. Just a couple days before the break, when they saw how much need there was in the community, and how many families were struggling, they raised – by digging into their own pockets – more than \$3,000 to purchase gift cards at local stores. Our school nurse coordinated the distribution of the cards to families who could use them.

I should mention that all of our school nurses play key roles when we help families in need, because in their position they are often most in the know about who could use assistance, and have built a high level of trust with students and their parents.

At the Freshman School, the annual “spare change drive” raised \$815 that was used to buy gifts for families community. At the same school, a science class sponsored a toy drive for needy children in our area. The toys were donated to St. Raphael's Social Services, who in turn provide holiday gifts to families and children. Students at the Middle School organized a canned food drive and collected an incredible 7,745 non-perishable food items. The Shared Harvest food bank said it would help support the families they help for two months.

Sometimes, it's the children who help take care of the village.

Our younger students help too. At West Elementary, for example, the student council conducted a one-day collection and raised \$247.36 for One Way Farm, which has been a haven for so many youths in need over the years. And the staff at West raised over \$1,000 to benefits needy students right in their own school. Our other elementaries were active in similar ways.

Not everything our staff and students are doing is related to the holidays. We recently had four students lost their homes in two separate house fires. One student goes to the high school, and students there were helping that family the day after the fire. The other students attend North Elementary and the Intermediate School, and both buildings were collecting not only money but also other items, especially clothes, that the families needed.

North Elementary is also partnering with the Bob Evans restaurant for a benefit breakfast for the Morgan family. One of their children, Nick, who's a fourth-grader at North, suffers from Chiari Malformation, a serious brain condition. He recently underwent his twelfth surgery. His sister Emilee, a high school student, is also dealing with the same condition. All of the proceeds from the pancake breakfast, from 7:30 to 11:30 a.m. on Sat., Jan. 10, at North Elementary, will go to the family to help with medical and travel expenses.

All these efforts have made life better for so many families. I am very proud of our students and our employees. They truly care about others.

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