



Advent Season is Filled with Generosity and Spirit

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE NVCA

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ST. THOMAS STAFF AND STUDENTS GIVE TO THEIR COMMUNITY

This winter, seventh and eighth grade students and several staff members from St. Thomas School in Oroville helped raise funds for members of their community by participating in bell ringing at local merchants, coordinated by the Salvation Army. Funds raised through this annual program benefits those in local communities needing assistance through the holiday season.

The events of the Carr Fire late in the year displaced thousands of families in our North State. Many families landed in one of our schools, including several at St Thomas. 5th grade student Ireland Willin saw an immediate need and call to action for her new friends, and reached out to Southern California relatives who, in her name, donated \$500 in gifts cards which Ireland then distributed to these families. The call to serve is a primary mission of our schools and it is heartwarming to see it alive in our students.



HOLIDAY SERVICE AND FESTIVITIES AT MERCY HIGH

This year Mercy High School and STREAM put a lot of thought and work into our holiday season. Administration and Campus ministry planned to ensure that the season had lots of activities and very clear goals. Specifically, we wanted to create an environment rich in tradition and community. It was important to us that the students not only enjoyed the holiday season but understood what we were celebrating so there was a concentration on being thankful for what we have, giving to others (tis' the season), and reflection, prayer, and preparation for advent and the coming of Christ (Christmas). The events themselves helped our students celebrate and grow in this manner.

Mercy High School and STREAM Academy kicked off our holiday season with a Thanksgiving Mass and a Thanksgiving potluck feast. Before sitting down together at as a school in the gym to enjoy their feast, Mercy and STREAM Students and staff took time to pray and reflect on what they were thankful for and how as we entered the Christmas Season we could give back to others. In addition to work already being done by our students to assist those affected by the Camp Fire, our students raised over \$150 for fire relief that day. On the Saturday after Thanksgiving, Mercy High School's student government and FFA program worked together to build and enter a Polar Express themed float in Red Bluff's annual Christmas Parade. Abby Clark and Madison Salazar, dressed as elves, walked alongside the float handing candy canes to watching children as well as flyers with information on how Camp Fire victims could take advantage of free tuition offers at Sacramento Diocese schools.

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NOTRE DAME HOSTS BIKES BECAUSE WE CARE

Notre Dame School was host to a very important delivery. BIKES BECAUSE WE CARE, our Catholic friends in Morgan Hill, brought 60 plus bikes to Notre Dame, Chico for Camp Fire evacuees. The bikes, along with Christmas toys were given to children (many of whom are students in our Catholic schools) from Oroville to Redding. We are very grateful to have been able to assist the non profit with distribution to a bunch of very happy children and families.



ST JOSEPH RALLIES FOR NVCSS AND CAMP FIRE CAMPAIGNS

During the holidays, Saint Joseph School garnered over \$10,000 in merchandise donations, the equivalent of three truckloads of wrapped gifts, for their thirteen "adopted" families. Each class adopted a family and the office adopted several families as well. Junior High leadership group student ambassadors traveled to NVCSS for four hours of wrapping presents for additional families and others assisted with loading and delivery of adopted family's gifts to NVCSS and gave several hours of assistance to other organizations loading and unloading gifts. SJS junior high students also sorted care packages at Our Lady of Mercy for NVCSS Camp Fire Care Packages campaign, and 1st-3rd grade students visited seniors at Merry Oaks and sang Christmas Carols, while other students in the junior high wrote Christmas cards for the homebound.

STREAM ACADEMY AND SACRED HEART CAROL IN THEIR COMMUNITY

On Thursday the 13th of December, STREAM students went Christmas caroling at Brentwood and Villa Columba Assisted living homes.

Students also handed out Christmas Cards that they had made to residents at both facilities.

After caroling at these locations, STREAM students joined students from Sacred Heart Elementary for its annual Christmas Caroling event in the neighboring housing development adjacent to Sacred Heart School.

On Friday December 14th the STREAM students participated in a prayer ceremony before bringing in their CHiPs for Kids donations to the lobby/gym where they joined the Mercy Students for a Christmas Tree Decoration rally and present wrapping event for Adopt-A-Families. As Sacred Heart School was holding their annual Christmas pageant in the gym, it had been decided that the STREAM students and Mercy students would hold a Christmas tree decorating contest to provide decorations for the pageant. Each first period class was provided with a Christmas tree and 10 minutes to decorate. The trees were then voted on by Sacred Heart students at the Christmas Pageant on Thursday the 20th of December. The winning class was awarded with a "relaxed dress day" on January 8th. After decorating the trees, all of the students returned to the locker for prayer, Secret Santa reveal, Christmas music and gift wrapping for the Adopt-A-Family drive.



FESTIVITIES FROM PG 1

When students returned to school after Thanksgiving break, they participated in the first of our weekly Advent prayer ceremonies held in the lobby. Each Monday our school came together to light an advent candle, pray, and reflect on the coming of Christ and what the season truly means. Students were also made aware of and encouraged to participate in local seasonal community service events. These weekly prayer meetings proved valuable at not just bringing the students together during the season, it also strengthening our commitment to our Catholic traditions and virtues. Additionally, we found this assisted in helping our international students better understand Christmas and the advent season.

The school participated in both the CHiPs for Kids and NVCSS' Adopt-a-Family campaign, opting to adopt a family from each of the counties that our students come from (Shasta, Tehama, and Butte). Both of these drives were highly successful, as we were able to fulfill all the needs of the adopted families and fill the CHiPs donation box three times over.

Sacred Heart School was to hold their Christmas program in the Mercy gym, so it was decided to have a tree decorating contest for the decor, among the Mercy classes. Trees were delivered and classes had 10 minutes to decorate, followed by a vote.

As the semester came to a close, students gathered for a final Christmas mass before finals.

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