

Thein: The magic of a child's wish

Contributed by Judy Thein
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If you could take the Christmas wishes of children you could build a stairway to the stars. And so it is in communities around Lake County this holiday season.

Numerous programs throughout the county have rekindled the spirit of Christmas through the eyes of children. Various agencies, organizations and individuals throughout the county worked inspirationally towards one common goal of giving children the opportunity to feel the joy of the season.

Children who never imagined their Christmas wishes could ever come true will feel the outpouring of kindness this holiday season thanks to the generosity of many people throughout the county. The outpouring of how communities opened their hearts to our children is overwhelming given the stress and anxiety of a plunging economy.

Along with various programs throughout the county, the city of Clearlake sponsored a Christmas wish tree for less fortunate children. For many of these children, this was the only gift that would be received. Our wish tree began with 60 ornaments, each with a child identification number, gender, age and the child's wish for Christmas. Before we knew it, our wish tree grew to 156 ornaments; all of this in just a matter of a few short weeks.

The wishes of children were in array from dolls, action figures, remote cars, musical toys and just about anything a toy department would carry. Skateboards appeared under the wish tree along with a scooter, rocking horse and the "kitchen sink," so to speak, as the wish of one little girl was to have her own little make believe kitchen.

Not only were there wishes for toys, but there were wishes for necessities as well. Several children just wanted something warm to wear while one child wanted a pair of slippers and socks. A pair of pajamas was the wish for another child while one wanted toiletries. It was heartfelt that for some of these children, Christmas wishes encumbered necessities for daily needs.

The wishes of our children twinkled in our hearts, as members of the community came into City Hall, one by one, to make wishes come true. Monetary donations and donated merchandise were also received from various organizations, businesses and many individuals throughout the community.

Volunteers and city staff volunteered their time to make ornaments, shop and gift wrap along with choosing a child's ornament to fulfill their wish. The success of our Christmas wish tree was truly a joint effort by many. It is clear that as the years go by, the Christmas wish tree for children will be a yearly tradition with the city of Clearlake.

One Dec. 15 our sponsored agencies arrived at City Hall to pick up the gifts and begin their joyful and sometimes emotional tasks of distributing the gifts to our children. Hundreds of gifts filled the lobby of City Hall. Not only did the eyes twinkle of many who saw and felt the spirit of the wish tree, but also there were tears reflecting the emotions of fulfilling a child's wish. Not only did we touch the lives of these children; these children touched our lives as well. It was unspoken as we each rekindled the blessings we have in our own lives.

I commend and thank the various agencies, organizations and individuals throughout Lake County for helping to make a difference in a child's life. For many of our children, they will feel the magic of Santa as the legend lives on.

It is heartfelt for me to humbly have the honor of saying on behalf of the city of Clearlake, city staff, police department and volunteers, a very sincere thank you to all those who helped fulfill the wishes of our children.

I believe the efforts of everyone who helped fulfill wishes throughout our county can best be expressed by the words of Forest Witcraft: "A hundred years from now it will not matter what my bank account was, the sort of house I lived in, or the kind of car I drove, but the world may be different because I was important in the life of a child."

Judy Thein is a member of the Clearlake City Council and will serve as vice mayor in 2009.

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