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Sellwood PTA Christmas project benefits families in need

Created on Thursday, 20 December 2012 05:00 | Written by [Peter Korchnak](#) |



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by: PETER KORCHNAK - From left: Asashi Kinjo, Paige Smallman, Lily Perkins, Maddie Ott, and Lydia Ofa, all Sellwood Middle School students, stand in front of the school's 2012 Holiday Giving Project bulletin board, with Student Management Specialist Charles Gendron, and PTA Board member Dawn Johnston.

The Sellwood Middle School Parent Teacher Association again this year has been spearheading a “Holiday Giving Project” which raises funds to purchase gifts for families in need within the school's community.

PTA Board Co-Vice President Dawn Johnston told THE BEE that the group focuses on donations of gift cards from local businesses, some of which they are also able to purchase with money donated to the effort. St. Vincent DePaul and Holy Family donate the food boxes.

“With gift cards, every family will have the freedom to pick the right presents,” Johnston said. “We present or deliver the gifts to twenty-one families on December 14.”

The Holiday Giving Project builds on more than two decades of volunteer effort. According to Johnston, the Sellwood PTA hopes at least to match last year's total. She said, “In 2011 we raised about \$2,250, and the PTA donated an additional \$750, which allowed us to spend close to \$3,000 for the families.”

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A 30-year Sellwood Middle School veteran, Student Management Specialist Charles “Charley” Gendron acts as the PTA's staff liaison with the families. He said, “Holiday giving has been going on here at the school as long as I can remember. It's a Sellwood community project.”

Johnston confirmed that the PTA tries to involve parents, teachers, staff, and students in the project. She said, “A student peer helper is assigned to each home room to provide information and to collect donations. All students are encouraged to bring in board games, gift cards, or money. Some students help shop, and gather the gift boxes as well.”

Gendron added that kids also help collect, sort, and wrap the gifts. He reflected, “I’ve been here half my adult life. I am blessed to live in a community that helps its own.”

“We have to take care of each other.”



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