

Circle of Friends kids give back

By Jodi Schneider McNamee
Correspondent

Eight excited kids, mentored by Circle of Friends volunteers, exemplified the meaning of the season by hunting for holiday gifts for their families on Monday. With gift certificates for Habitat for Humanity Thrift Store donated by ZoselHarper Realtors, the kids were ready to shop. The kids collected items for grandparents, parents, and siblings and even the family pet.

With a wide selection of stuffed animals, home décor, Christmas decorations, tools, games, puzzles, clothing and much more, there was plenty to choose from for every family member. And the perfect end to the holiday shopping extravaganza was being able wrap their gifts inside ZoselHarper Realtors on Cascade Avenue. The Circle of Friends mentors were ready to assist their little shoppers while everyone sipped hot cocoa and ate holiday cookies.

This is the second year that ZoselHarper Realtors has sponsored the holiday gift certificates for Circle of Friends children.

After each sale, ZoselHarper Realtors donate to any one of five nonprofit organizations and one of the nonprofits is Circle of Friends.

“Last year it was the best part of Christmas, seeing these little kids so filled with excitement and joy that they got to buy something for their families,” said Carol Zosel, Realtor and Circle of Friends board member.

The idea of involving the nonprofit organization with an opportunity for the children to give back was hatched while Zosel and close friend Jeanette Pilak, Sisters Outdoor Quilt Show director, were working out at the gym.

“I had been telling Jeanette how much I miss kids since I’m a retired educator. And we both came up with the idea of giving the Circle of Friends kids a Habitat certificate,” Zosel said. “I grew up in a big family with six siblings and it was always a struggle to buy something for a family member.”

Kelly Davis Martin, associate director for Circle of Friends, was on hand to help the enthusiastic group with

shopping and wrapping.

“Part of our program centers around a growth mindset in building on children’s core assets. And one of those core assets is about being connected and another is about giving back,” Davis Martin said. “Our mentors and our children have expressed a desire to be able to give back. And this was an opportunity for the children to give back to their family.”

Nine-year-old Alex paused for a minute from wrapping loads of presents to tell *The Nugget* what she thought about being able to buy gifts for her family.

“This is the time of year when I can actually get presents for my family,” she said, smiling. “It’s really neat to be able to pick out which wrapping paper to use and the ribbon I want. I picked out a present for my mom, dad, my cousins, two brothers, grandmother, papa and my sister as well!”

Volunteer mentor Victoria Boucher was helping Jayden pick out paper to wrap presents for his entire family.

“This has been a wonderful experience, the kids feel empowered that they can buy gifts for family members,”



PHOTO BY JODI SCHNEIDER MCNAMEE

Circle of Friends Mentor Victoria Boucher assists a youngster with wrapping the gifts he selected for loved ones.

Boucher said.

“The thing that is so amazing to me about the Circle of Friends program is that their mentors are volunteers. These mentors give three

to five hours of their time a week. And I think that anything we can do to help support them and to give them an opportunity with their kids is worthwhile,” Zosel added.

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and a Prosperous
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