

**TOY PROJECT:** Crafters create Christmas the old-fashioned way

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was shown. Everyone agreed the project is a “labor of love” that gets better every year.

“These toys are going to such a good cause,” said Sisters woodworker Dennis Mills. “These kids probably wouldn’t get any presents if not for these toys. It hits you hard in the chest.”

The collaborative effort began six years ago when all the woodworkers were part of COW, until the people from Sisters split off and formed their own group. Now both groups contribute to the Christmas effort. The program got a big boost this year from Hardwood Industries in Bend with a donation of 250 board feet of poplar lumber from which to craft the toys.

Representatives of each of the agencies shared stories of the impact the toys have on the recipients. Healthy Families provides family support services that are aimed at preventing child abuse. They build relationships with families through weekly visits for up to three years.

Their representative shared the story of a family with three children and mental health issues, living in a two-bedroom single-wide mobile home. Their only heat came from a small woodstove with a broken door. Despite being here legally, the father was fearful of being deported. Their transportation was unreliable and they were lacking adequate clothing and food. Toys and enrichment activities were beyond their means. Last Christmas, the youngest girl received a cradle and doll, having never had a doll before. The mother referred to it as the little girl’s heirloom.

Head Start, whose motto is “Healthy minds, healthy learners,” provides free, parent-driven preschool programs for low-income children. Head Start and Early Head Start offer family-centered services that enhance social competence, school readiness, and overall health and well-being. There are nine sites in Central



PHOTO BY SUE STAFFORD

Woodworkers and crafters have engaged in a labor of love to provide for children in need in the community.

Oregon, and one family from each location will be chosen to receive the toys.

Kathy Malone, who volunteers as a CASA for children in foster care, talked about little Katie who received a cradle and doll. The doll was the first thing she would bring out every time Malone visited. It was the one thing she could take with her if she got moved to a different family.

Two years ago, three brothers in foster care each received one of the airplanes.

They were frequently moved for foster placement and the planes always moved with them. They have finally found their forever home in north-east Oregon with their adoptive family.

“We get to take the love you’ve put into the toys and share it with the children,” Malone told the toymakers.

The afternoon concluded with a reception including hors d’oeuvres, wine, and beer, where woodworkers and crafters swapped stories.

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Woodworkers made First World War-era biplane models.

**Singing out...**

PHOTO BY JERRY BALDOCK

The Johnson Girls performed at the Sisters High School Jazz Choir’s Holiday Showcase.

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