

GIFT *from A1*

Local nonprofit Family Relief Nursery, which serves the communities of Cottage Grove, Creswell and Drain, was one of the recipients.

“It was fabulous,” said Family Relief Nursery Executive Director Peggy Whalen. “We received 50 gift cards, which was far beyond what we anticipated.”

In all, 40 families in the service area received gift cards (as they were distributed according to children in the household) and other donations through the nonprofit.

Family Relief Nursery uses its resources to support high-risk families to help children

grow up in a healthy environment.

This holiday season, the nonprofit received an influx of donated gifts through its own “Stuff the Van” project, which collected donations from area outlets, while multiple businesses also donated toys. On top of that, the Toys for Tots program contributed leftover gifts from this year’s event.

“The community was super generous with us this year,” said Whalen. “With all the things we got, our families were treated so well. And it was so exciting to be able to provide gifts and the gift cards so that they could use those for food and for buying special things that they wanted to get for their

kids. We’ve said this was the best Christmas ever for our families.”

After all these donations, Whalen said the gift cards were just “the cherry on top.”

Whalen was also effusive in her praise for the community.

“I just feel like everyone really stepped up and went above and beyond,” she said. “And I kind of felt like we made up a little bit for last year ... which was really what our families needed.”

The Lane Community Health Council asked United Way to leverage its broad network of community partners to get the gift cards into the hands of historically underserved families — families who are Black,

Indigenous, and people of color, families in rural communities, and those struggling with poverty — communities in which United Way particularly seeks to invest.

“Giving financial assistance — direct cash and gift cards — is one of the most helpful and empowering ways to provide support to families, allowing them to decide what’s most important for their families,” said United Way through a press release. “These gift cards, even at \$50, are meaningful to families, especially since families can choose what’s most important for them — gifts for their kids that otherwise may not have been possible this year,

special foods to share as families revise our holiday plans and traditions, or any other needs that exist right now.”

The holiday gift cards were distributed through the following agencies and programs: 4J ECCO Program, The ARC of Lane County, Boys and Girls Club of Western Lane County, Centro Latino Americano, Creswell Family Resource Center, Eugene 4J NATIVES Program, Family Relief Nursery (Cottage Grove), First Place Family Center/First Place Kids, Head Start, H.O.N.E.Y. Inc.,

Hope & Safety Alliance, Goldson Grange, Junction City Local Aid, Kids for the Culture, Lane African American Black Student Success, Lowell Family Resource Center, Mapleton Food Share, McKenzie Family Resource Center, McKenzie Long Term Recovery Group, Oakridge Early Learning Center, Oregon Family Support Network, Parenting Now!, Pearl Buck, Relief Nursery, and Triangle Food Box.

More information about United Way can be found at the organization’s website at unit-edwaylane.org.

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We Are Better Together

As we look to a new year, we're celebrating what connects us as a community, and what we can do to bridge our divides. From virtual events and local perspectives to cultural insights and conversation starters, we invite you to join us in making our Community better, together.

Help rebuild our economy by supporting these and other local businesses!

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NEWSPAPER

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