

DISTRICT UPDATE

Outreach Brightens Migrant Christmas Celebration

Hundreds of volunteers spent weeks preparing for the 2006 Messiah Migrant Ministries Christmas Outreach, celebrated December 16 at the Plant City Winter Visitor Center. Attending were 325 migrant families — including 1,045 children.



Connie Sikkema, Migrant Ministry Director at Messiah-Carrollwood, provided direction for the annual event. Volunteers and gift donations reached far beyond the congregation to include many other churches, businesses, individuals, social and fraternal clubs and schools. Metropolitan Ministries contributed turkeys and food to augment the Christmas food baskets.

While the children waited to enter the magic Christmas House, families were treated to cookies and fruit punch. The first stop along Christmas Lane was a book table where children could select a book to take home. Next stop was a visit with Santa and Mrs. Claus, who made an early appearance to hear last-minute Christmas wishes and

pass out candy. Santa's elves were nearby passing out new, unwrapped toys for every child in the family.

Each family member then received a "sharing package" containing generous supplies of shampoo, toothbrush, toothpaste, soap, washcloth, and a small toy or gift. The next stop on Christmas Lane provided families with a new blanket or quilt. The final and most anticipated stop was Santa's Toy Shop where every child received a wrapped age and gender specific gift to open on Christmas morning.

After being helped to their vehicles with their gifts, the families stopped at Santa's Kitchen to pick up oversized food baskets complete with turkeys and Bible tracts. □



SANTA'S HELPERS — National Junior Honor Society members from St. Paul Lutheran School-Lakeland, FL, volunteered their time at the city's Christmas Toy Shop last December. This is a non-profit organization that donates toys, bikes, games, stuffed animals, books and more to needy children. Shown here with teacher Jill Smith, far right, front row, and parent Diane Rhoden, second from left, from row, are students (front, l-r) Sabrina Morby, Julia Conatser, Kacy Scarpa, Todd Lockwood, Sarah Stump, Amanda Erwin, Lexi Rhoden, Erin Ginn, Anthony Lucido, (middle, l-r) Brittany Richardson, Melissa Wellslager, Hope Andreadis, Lauren Andersen, Drew Glamory, Shelbi Kuhlman, Emily Rice, Karla Thiele, Tara Lassi, (back, l-r) Femi Sobawale, Emily Bowers, Josh Schell, David Brekke, Kevin Pahl, Thomas Shaw, Mathew Norgard. □

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Student Caroling Spreads Christmas Cheer

Students at St. Paul Lutheran School-Boca Raton, FL, shared the joy of the Christmas season with caroling at area senior centers.

Members of the seventh-grade classes sang carols and delivered hand-made cards to residents of St. Andrews Estates Nursing Home on December 20.

"They wanted to really do something special this year," said seventh-grade social studies teacher Kate McCarthy. The students were accompanied by McCarthy and her co-teacher, Sharlene Freiderichs.

Each year, St. Paul students undertake a community service

project around the holidays, said McCarthy. Normally, they "adopt" needy families and provide holiday gifts for them. That happened this year, but McCarthy said her students wanted to do more.

"The kids like the feeling of giving back to the community," she said.

During December, members of Joy Beach's fifth-grade choir from St. Paul entertained residents at Edgewater Pointe Estates, a retirement community. The choir sang some traditional Christmas songs as well as some toe-tapping, hand-clapping selections. □



Members of the St. Paul Fifth Grade Choir entertain residents of Edgewater Pointe Estates.



NEW LIFE LUTHERAN-Miramar, FL, welcomed 13 new members recently — one transfer and the others through baptism and adult confirmation. They are shown here with New Life Pastor James Tino. □



OAK ROAD LUTHERAN CHURCH-LILBURN, GA received 19 new members — including the 17 shown here — on the First Sunday in Advent, December 3, 2006. They came into membership by transfer and profession of faith, reported Pastor George Murdaugh. □