

FREMD HIGH SCHOOL NHS STUDENTS GRANT WISHES FOR CHICAGO, LOCAL CHARITIES

For this holiday season, National Honor Society students at Fremd High School participated in the largest service event of the school year.

Each year, roughly 240 NHS students grant wishes for Angel Tree and Grant a Wish. The students receive a certain amount of wishes from the organizations, and they volunteer their time and efforts to help make a child's holiday season a bit brighter. This year's collection took place on Dec. 12.

"NHS is all about the service they can do no matter how small or how big," said Jane Richards, business education teacher at Fremd High School and NHS sponsor. "This happens to be the largest service event we do all year, and it not only serves Palatine but goes outside of our community. Everyone loves going out and buying gifts, and it gets them into whatever holiday spirit and celebrating."

Senior NHS students handled the Chicago-based Grant a Wish Foundation, while juniors took care of Angel Tree, a Palatine-based organization that provides holiday gifts to children below poverty level. Each member was responsible for granting the wishes of one child, although some students take multiple children.

Students received cards from the organization that stated the child's name, age, and what they wished for. This included a wide-range of items, such as books, dolls, trucks, or clothing. Additionally, each Grant a Wish gift includes a hat, mittens, and socks. The typical gift amount is \$50. After students purchased their gifts, they wrapped them and a group delivered them to both organizations.

PODS (Portable On-Demand Storage) donated units for a safe place to store gifts at the high school. PODS then picked up the units with a truck, and 40 senior students traveled to Chicago to deliver gifts to the Grant a Wish headquarters. Afterward, they visited a daycare center that they bought gifts for. There, they read and sang songs with children as young as six months old through eighth grade.

"NHS is all about the service they can do no matter how small or how big," Richards said. "This happens to be the largest service event we do all year, and it not only serves Palatine, but goes outside of our community. Everyone loves going out and buying gifts, and it gets them into the holiday spirit and celebrating."

NHS' involvement with Grant a Wish has been going on for more than 20 years. Originally, a student at FHS first organized the school's involvement with the late Lorraine Anne Blair, founder of Grant a Wish. Since then, the event has grown. Angel Tree was added because of NHS' growing membership six years ago. Richards said she wanted to make sure each of the students could be involved and do something within the community. The best part, she said, is seeing how her students are moved by this event.

“I love seeing that our NHS members love giving,” Richards said. “They know that these children need this. These are poverty-level children, and this may be the biggest gift they receive. Sometimes when I hand out the wish cards, our students say, ‘wow, all this child wants is a coat,’ and a four-year-old isn’t wishing for a toy. Students get perspective, and it’s great for them to help people out.”