

K-Kids offers elementary students chance to serve

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David Turnham Education Center fourth-graders Emerson Schaefer, left, and Emma Fischer create pine cone ornaments during the K-Kids club meeting at the school in Dale on Nov. 14. Club members participate during recess every other Wednesday. "I love glitter ... and I like helping people," Emma said about why she likes being involved in K-Kids. The ornaments will be donated to a nursing home. Nic Antaya/The Herald

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DALE — The Christmas spirit arrived a few weeks early at David Turnham Education Center.

About 25 students gave up a day of recess last week to make ornaments for residents at Willowdale Village nursing home in Dale. Later, another 25 kids will give up a day of recess to deliver the ornaments and sing Christmas carols to the residents.

All 50 of the students involved in the project are members of K-Kids, a service club for elementary school students sponsored by Kiwanis Club.

David Turnham's K-Kids club, which the Dale Kiwanis Club sponsors, was founded nine years ago, and is one of the most popular clubs at the school. Open to first- through sixth-graders, the club has about 50 members, and splits into two groups — first- through third-graders and fourth- through sixth-graders — with each group meeting every other Tuesday during recess.

Throughout the year, the club organizes a handful of service projects around the school and Dale. The ornaments and Christmas caroling will be this year's first project.

"It helps people see that they should give back to the community," said sixth-grader Kerigan Pund, K-Kids vice president.

Students lead the club, although adults — first-grade teacher Heather Souders, fourth-grade teacher Abbie Balbach, Kiwanis member Kurt Willard and parent Sarah Mick — are there to offer guidance.

With the ornaments, for example, the students came up with the idea to give them to residents of Willowdale Village and carol as part of their annual visit to the nursing home. They also spent a couple of meetings looking for ideas on Pinterest, then discussed which three ornaments to choose. The final decision was up to the students, but the adults offered input about the cost of supplies for each ornament, encouraging the students to be good stewards of the club's budget.

Ultimately, the kids chose snow-covered pine cones made with real pine cones and glitter; reindeer made with clear ornament balls and pipe-cleaner antlers; and Christmas trees made from cardboard, yarn and pompoms.

For sixth-grader Savannah Gogel, president of the club, the annual visit to Willowdale Village is the best part of being in K-Kids.

"It's nice to see the smiles on [the residents'] faces," she said.

Other annual projects include a schoolwide money war fundraiser that helps one David Turnham family in need at Christmastime; a Cancer Week fundraiser in the second semester that raises money for a cancer charity of the students' choosing; and a clean-up day at Dale Park.

"Getting the kids to think about community service at this young age is what it's all about," Willard said.

Currently, David Turnham is the only elementary school in the North Spencer County School Corporation to offer K-Kids. Locally, however, Pine Ridge Elementary and Cedar Crest Intermediate School in the Southeast Dubois County School Corporation also offer the club.