

THE GIFT OF GIVING

ELVES

RSVP's Little Elves Workshop teaches more than meets the eye

LINDSAY OWENS

TIMES HERALD

Gifts may come in all kinds of packages but for those with little ones attending Head Start locally, gifts, hand-picked by the children, come carefully wrapped with love.

Bright pink multi-tools, boxes of chocolates and colorful canisters filled with popcorn were just a few of the dozens of items available at the Little Elves Workshop, held Wednesday at Washington's Head Start facility.

Those little elves, Head Start students who were shopping for their family members, were assisted by some bigger elves, members of the Retired Senior Volunteer Program, commonly known as RSVP.

"We have 40 children from Washington Head Start this year and on Thursday, we will bring the Little Elves Workshop to 20 students at the North Daviess Head Start program," said Kim Herbertz, executive director of RSVP.

Started around 15 years ago, the Little Elves Workshop teaches children more than meets the eye.

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Happy shopper CeCe takes her bag and heads off to the wrapping department of the Little Elves Workshop Wednesday. Held at the Washington Head Start facility, the annual shopping day hosted by RSVP teaches not only the gift of giving but also early financial literacy.

Photos by Lindsay Owens | Times Herald



RSVP volunteer Jenny Richardson, left, waits for Karter and his shopping buddy, RSVP Executive Director Kim Herbertz, to pay for his purchases with the Santa Bucks he earned during the Little Elves Workshop Wednesday.

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this year was Phyllis Sharum.

"This brings back so many memories," said Sharum, who taught Head Start here for 20 years, as she waited for the children to arrive. "This is my fifth time helping and I just love it."

“We want to teach them it’s just as much fun to give as it is to receive,” said Herbertz, who along with several volunteers and with the help of Lisa Coquillard, RSVP’s program coordinator, restocked the gift tables between helping children shop.

Volunteers didn’t just assist with the shopping duties. A team of wrappers was also needed to keep family members guessing what was hidden beneath the wrapping paper and others were needed to serve as cashiers.

But that’s not all the children learn.

Financial literacy is also a big part of the fun as well.

RSVP volunteer Vic Linneweber helps Leonardo shop for his family during the Little Elves Workshop held Wednesday at the Washington Head Start facility.

The children are each able to select two gifts, some donated and others purchased through support from the United Way of Daviess County, for their family members and then use Santa Bucks to “pay” for their purchases. Santa Bucks are earned for positive behavior and other accomplishments and, just like magic, the children always have just the right amount to cover their purchase.

Lindsay Owens | Times Herald

Zella Taylor, executive director of the United Way of Daviess County, said the project is one that the local agency is happy to be funding again.

“With the in-kind donations of gifts, supplies and wonderful RSVP volunteers, they are able to teach early financial literacy of earning, spending and saving with the children. It’s the cutest thing to be able to see the children being able to buy something with their own ‘money’ for their loved ones,” said Taylor, adding its the United Way’s annual campaign, which runs through the end of the month, that helps to support this and other projects that benefit the Daviess County community.

One of the volunteers helping children shop