



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Michigan's first National School of Character hosts annual night of service

Clawson, Michigan - December 11, 2014 - Students send holiday wishes to soldiers serving overseas: Japhet School students and their families gathered to spread holiday cheer to active duty soldiers on Thursday, Dec. 11. With the help of parents, teachers and peers, preschool through eighth-grade students crafted fleece socks, scarves and heartfelt letters as part of Family Service Night, an annual tradition that underscores the school's character-driven curriculum. Students and faculty are finishing up more than 50 pairs of socks and a dozen scarves to donate to Operation Gratitude, which ship care packages to thousands of soldiers deployed overseas year-round.

"It's really fun to help other people," said fifth-grade student Annabelle Sitarek as she carefully traced a sock pattern over a colorful mound of fleece.

Her mother, Stacey Sitarek, said Annabelle learned how much of an impact Family Service Night has when a veteran responded to a holiday greeting she wrote two years ago.

"People just don't think about our soldiers during this time of year," Stacey Sitarek said. "So when they do, it really means a lot. It's great for these young people to see that so early in their lives."

For many Japhet families like the Sitareks, Family Service Night has become a holiday tradition. The annual event, which is currently in its eighth year, is paired with a Spaghetti Supper served by seventh and eighth grade students. The students cook and serve the meal to families before they move to letter-writing and sock-making stations. This year, more than 100 meals were served.

"We should always be grateful to those fighting for our freedom," said Kerrigan Carr, a seventh-grade student who helped serve Spaghetti Supper. "It's important to give back to them because they're giving so much to our country."

Victoria Turner, the mother of 5-year-old Japhet student Christopher Turner, attended her first Family Service Night on Thursday.

"I've never experienced anything quite like this," she said. "It's great to see all of the heartfelt messages from the children. It helps them understand the sacrifice these soldiers make and drives home some of the character traits they learn at school every day."

About Japhet School: Founded in 1973, Japhet School is an independent school, serving children the metropolitan Detroit area in preschool through eighth grade. Its mission is to nurture and prepare each child for life by integrating character education with a strong academic program. The school provides small classes of fewer than 20

students in each, which enables teachers to challenge students with academic material that is appropriate for their intellectual readiness, regardless of age or grade. Integrated with strong academics is Japhet School's national award-winning character education curriculum, which builds a peaceful community within the school and creates leaders with integrity. Japhet is a National School of Character: it was the first school in Michigan -- and the first independent school in the country -- to receive this award. Japhet School is located in Clawson, Michigan, and the corner of Crooks and Normandy roads. To learn more about Japhet, visit www.japhetschool.org.



Japhet School student Christopher Turner, 5, cuts a sock pattern out of fleece with the help of his mother, Victoria Turner. Japhet students completed more than 50 pairs of socks and two dozen scarves for soldiers deployed overseas during the school's eighth annual Family Service Night on Dec. 11.



Japhet School fifth-grader Annabelle Sitarek cuts a sock pattern out of fleece with the help of her mother, Stacey Sitarek. This year marked the family's sixth Family Service Night at Japhet School.



Seventh- and eighth-grade students prepared a Spaghetti Supper for families that participated in Family Service night on Dec. 11.