

EVEN START CHILDREN SHARE THE HOLIDAYS WITH LAGUNA BEACH COMMUNITY

Once again the last week of school before the Winter Break was filled with community celebrations for the students of the Even Start Preschool Program at the Boys & Girls Club of Laguna Beach. The Even Start Preschool program is a free school readiness program which exclusively serves 3 and 4 year olds living in low income households. The festivities started on Tuesday, December 6, when students in PAL Club at Thurston Middle School came to bring donuts, hot chocolate, and gifts for the children. The PAL Club is a peer and community outreach program under the direction of Kay Ostensen, a retired Laguna Beach School District employee. On Tuesday, December 13, Lisa Fredette, and her daughter Sydney, brought 80 Build-A-Bears to be given to all the children in the Even Start Preschool Program and their siblings, and the children cared for at the La Playa Center, an ESL program for adults. By the end of the day, all 80 bears had found good homes! On Wednesday, December 14, the children had a visit from Santa Claus (Bob Strum) and his wife, who came bearing gifts and good cheer for the children in the Even Start Preschool program and the La Playa Center. Thursday, December 15, found the Even Start Preschool children singing seasonal songs at a luncheon for the seniors at the new Community/Senior Center. Organized by Patty Quilter, Senior Center Coordinator for the City of Laguna Beach, this annual event features the children singing songs and giving original handmade cards to all the seniors. The children then shared a wonderful luncheon with the seniors. The week's festivities culminated in the annual party with the Laguna Beach Police Department on Friday, December 16. The police officers bring gifts for each child, and the parents of the children bring food to share with the police. "This is the one of the best times of the year for our children, parents, and staff," states Terry Anne Barman, Preschool Director. "We all have the opportunity to share time with members of our wonderful community. It is so beautiful to see the children embracing the seniors and the members of our police department. It is also a wonderful experience for their parents who have an opportunity to be a part of our

community and to be able to give what they can to express their appreciation for all that the residents of Laguna Beach do for them.”

The Boys & Girls Club of Laguna Beach also worked with Hobie Sports in Laguna Beach who find sponsors for 25 low-income Club members to buy gifts and help make the Holiday Season for these children much brighter. The Laguna Parent’s Club sponsored 15 Club families who were in need of help this Holiday Season. Also Paula Hornbuckle, Boys & Girls Club of Laguna Beach Board member, organized the BG’s and 100 Women for Kids compiling the Christmas wish lists for the preschool children and their siblings. A wrapping party was held, and all the children on the list were sponsored and received wonderful gifts. “The generosity of all the members of our wonderful community has been amazing,” stated Terry Anne Barman. “This has been an exceptionally difficult year for our families due to the economic challenges facing our country. It has been wonderful to see how people have reached out to help others in need. It is the true spirit of Christmas at work.”

The Boys & Girls Club of Laguna Beach is *“The Positive Place For Kids!”*

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