



# SyossetPatch



About Town

By **Susan Leaderman** 9:00am

SCHOOLS, VOLUNTEERS IN THE NEWS

## They Come First

A local elementary school takes time out of their day to help spread cheer to the area's community group home.

It takes a village - [Village Elementary School](#), that is - to come together for their fourth annual Holiday Workshop to make wishes come true for children living at Mercy First, a residential treatment center for adolescents, located on Convent Road.

Taking over the Village gymnasium, a group of devoted PTA moms and students were wrapping all sorts of presents for 30 children. The gifts will be presented at a breakfast held at [Celebrity Diner](#), generously sponsored by a Village family.

"Donations came pouring in this year and we were able to give each child a shopping tote filled to the brim with everything from home baked cookies, blankets, scarves, gloves, hats, watches, pajama pants, gift cards from Target and assorted toiletries stuffed in stockings," said **Kelly Frain**, one of the PTA moms who have been running this event from the beginning.

"Whether our families donate gifts or make home baked cookies, the Mercy First children feel so special knowing that for them," she said.

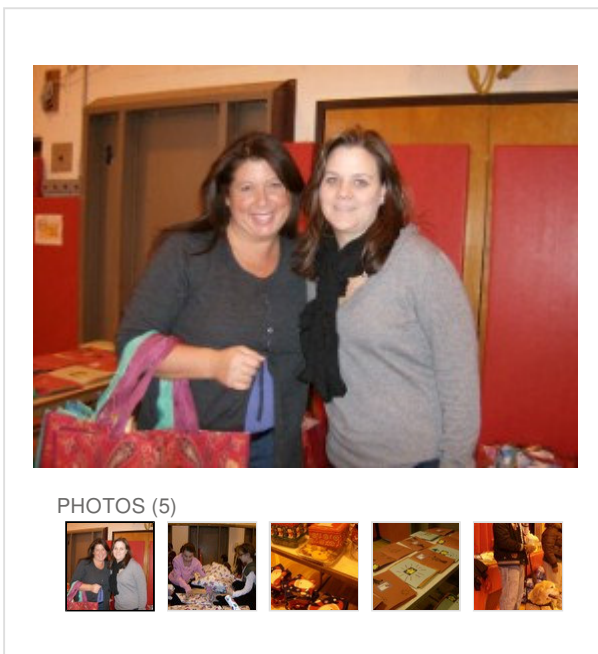
Tables were set up like Santa's workshop loaded with supplies as PTA parents and the Village students used miles of gift taping. Handmade cards were created by the younger students and meaningful messages were written, addressed by name.

"Village has a program called Book Buddies where an older child mentors a younger one," Frain said. "Last week they saw heartfelt sentiment, it was a teaching moment. In addition to a lesson in expressive writing, it was a lesson about giving.

Besides the numerous gifts, the children will receive an Xbox 360 Kinect and lacrosse net for all to share and to add to the Pump-it-Up in Plainview.

As the gifts were packed away, the Village students were treated to a visit by two Mercy First children. They came with talk about a rewarding program they are involved in called ECAD (Educated Canines Assisting with Disabilities).

Dogs are trained by the Mercy First kids to help people with mental and physical challenges and one of their pet projects involves veterans. The kids expressed how working with dogs teaches them patience, structure, and discipline, and in turn, while they show them loyalty and unconditional love.



It's a win-win for all, Village school included.

*If you are interested in volunteering your time at Mercy First please contact **Karen Peterson** at [kpeterson@mercyfir](mailto:kpeterson@mercyfir)*

*ECAD is looking to train a local certified teacher to work with the Mercy First children and their assistance dogs so ple <http://ecad1.org>*

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