

21st CENTURY CLASSROOM

Remembering, giving thanks, and reaching out

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ST. ALBANS—Thursday, Nov. 21, was a very busy place at City School. Hundreds of families and dozens of senior citizens from our community joined us for our annual Thanksgiving Dinner. As part of our celebrations, we dedicated the 'Dancing Fruits and Veggies' Mural in honor of Jo-An Baillargeon. We also took a moment to celebrate three remarkable people who volunteered in our school.

Each year the Abbey hosts several dinners where we encourage parents and families to join us. Thanksgiving dinner is one of the largest. This family-school time allows children to share their school experience with their families. It is such a special time for the young children. The meal served by the Abbey is a healthy version of Thanksgiving dinner, meeting all school requirements for healthy eating, yet including the foods that make Thanksgiving special. They serve turkey with gravy, stuffing, rolls and pumpkin

bars, with a generous serving of vegetables to balance. We

have so many families join us that extra tables are set up in the art gallery to make sure we have room for everyone. This year we served over a thousand meals. Georgie Andrews, the Assistant Principal, Mark Hoben, the Home School Coordinator and Naz, a student, helped our food service staff in the serving line to make sure everyone was served.

Team USA students, again this year, hosted the Thanksgiving Dinner for Senior Citizens. They handled the invitations and transformed their classroom space into a restaurant for the day. Tablecloths were topped with special place-mats, made by our kindergarten students, and balloons. The 7th and 8th grade students were there to greet, host and serve our guests. Behind the scenes there was much discussion about how to be efficient and effective. The students took the lead and worked out the details collaboratively. The event went smooth. Before dinner the seniors listened to our

band play and then joined us in two of our celebrations.

We were so excited to have our Dancing Fruits and Veggies Mural, painted by the students in honor of Jo-An Baillargeon, dedicated on this day. Jo-An provided more than 30 years of devotion and service to our school. She made our food service the place it is today. We miss her and still remember and celebrate all that she gave us. It was just a few months before she died in 2011 that she told me about her dream of having dancing fruits and vegetables greet the children as they wait in line. She also spoke to Kathi Brown, an art teacher at St. Albans City School, about this dream. Kathi brought together students and the art department to turn Jo-An's dream into reality. It is framed and hung in the hall where students wait for their meals. A plaque dedicates the artwork to 'our beloved lunch lady'. Daniel and Skyler, 8th grade students, spoke about what Jo-An meant to all of us. We were pleased that so many members of Jo-An's family were able to join us



Courtesy photo

Team USA students set up an effective system to serve the seniors.

for this dedication. Her husband, children and grandchildren were all here along with many of the people she worked with at the Abbey.

The final celebration on this day is one we hope will grow. We are entering our third year of working with Mary Pelkey and the Foster Grandparent Program. City School has three incredible Foster Grandparents working with us, and we are so grateful for their involvement in our School. Guy and Theresa Hope are well known to Kindergarten as "Grandpa Guy" and "Grandma". According to kindergarten teacher, Sally

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Lawyer, "Grandpa Guy is a gentle giant specializing in teaching our students craftsmanship and helping children with their work projects. Grandma Theresa is our "Snack Queen" delivering morning snack to all of Kindergarten. She is quite crafty with students, helping them with arts and crafts and center work. Both Guy and Theresa are kind, loving, and nurturing here and every child feels the special bond that grandparents provide." In Team Discovery, Grandma Jenny (Jenny Madden) is working with our 4th grade. Kristen Klein, the Discovery Special Educator, said

"Grandma Jenny has created great relationships with our 4th grade students. She reads with them and helps them with writing and math." She added that "Grandma Jenny keeps finding ways to spend more time with us." There are just some moments in a child's life where a grandparent is the perfect solution. Our Foster Grandparents are just amazing. They are here everyday making the kind of connections only a grandparent can make. We would love to have more of seniors join us. They make a world of difference in our children's lives.