

OUR STORIES

School Nurse Linda McDole and her holiday helper



Photo from left: Linda McDole accepts holiday donations from Jasmine, Odell Howell, and Tim Howell, at Meadowdale PreK-6 School. (Photo/Jill Drury)

The need in our community seems to sting a bit more than usual during the holidays, but it allows us to take inventory of what matters most. While there are people in need year-round, it sometimes takes the holiday spirit to spring us into action. Meadowdale PreK-6 School nurse, Linda McDole, sees that need every day as students visit her clinic. It might be a simple bandage for a scraped knee, but McDole sometimes notices something more. On occasion, it is a child who doesn't have a proper pair of shoes to wear or one who laments over a Christmas without presents under the tree. A person needs only to meet Linda once to see how those children pull at her heartstrings and prompt her generosity of spirit.

It was one such occasion nearly four years ago that still makes a difference now. Odell Howell arrived at Meadowdale PreK-6 to complete coursework for a nursing class at Sinclair

Community College. She noticed McDole, quietly and without fanfare, give a young girl new shoes, so that she could participate in gym class.

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“I realized at that moment how many students there are in need and I wanted to do something to help,” Howell said. “You don’t know what these kids might be going through outside of school, so I at least thought I could make some of them happy at Christmas.”

Her “a-ha” moment resulted in a yearly holiday delivery. This year, Howell, along with her husband, Tim, and Santa’s helper, Jasmine, pulled up to Meadowdale PreK-6 on a cold and blustery Friday afternoon in their pickup truck and unloaded Santa bag after Santa bag of toys and supplies to give to students in need. And, who will play the jolly old elf? Linda McDole.

“I see the need and the staff here sees the need,” McDole said. “They let me know which children could use a helping hand, so that I can share something with them when they visit me in the clinic. These items from the Howells are so appreciated.”

The Howells purchased the items with their own money, although this year, they had a little help from Odell’s mother, who had a summertime garage sale and donated the money she made.

“There are 365 kids in our school, many of which don’t get a Christmas, so to have someone do this for our school is great,” Principal Therman Sampson said. “The students see that she is doing something to help and they really appreciate it.”

McDole is a 22-year employee of Dayton Public Schools. She’s been working at Meadowdale PreK-6 for five years. Odell Howell finished her studies at Sinclair and is working toward the necessary nursing licenses required in her field. In the meantime, her motivation is clear.

“We never had kids of our own, so God brought us this little outlet to help people and give back,” Odell Howell said.

There is little doubt that the sleigh in the form of a pickup truck, full of toys, will pull up to Meadowdale PreK-6 again next year. And, there is no doubt that Linda McDole will be there



bundled up in her coat and stocking cap to accept the precious items that help make the holidays bright for so many thankful students.