



News

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Army and Navy Academy Interact Club provides Valentine's Day party at Operation Hope

CARLSBAD, Calif. – Nine members of Army and Navy Academy's Interact Club put some extra love into Valentine's Day for children and families at Vista's Operation Hope, one of the only emergency homeless shelters in North San Diego County.

Last Thursday, cadets organized a round-robin of three tables of activities for approximately 20 children. The activities included cookie decorating, games and crafts.

At the crafts table, the cadets helped children – and sometimes their parents – make Valentine's Day cards and other decorations. Cadets David Howard, Alexander Mui and Chris Feree organized the crafts. Howard found himself not only a helper but a learner as one of the children showed him how to make an origami heart.

At the cookie table, led by Cadets Kevin Truong, Albert Lai and Wie-Chen Chen, children put their creative talents to use with frosting and other decorations; then they enjoyed eating the results of their work.

The games table, with the assistance of Cadets Chris Roberts, Lamar Greenwood and Ron Ruangtragool, included a Valentine word search and H-E-A-R-T Bingo. Children who participated in the games received Valentine pencils and bags of candy.

Cadets began to form some special relationships with the children, as well. When they discovered that one of the children would celebrate her birthday the next day, a rousing cadet-led chorus of "Happy Birthday, dear Ashley" resounded through the building. Additionally, when Mui found out that one of his new buddies wants a remote control car, he immediately began making plans to provide one.

"When I first met Robert, he was the only boy at the crafts table with all girls," Mui said. "I asked him if he had any friends there, and he said he and his family just moved from

Texas a short time ago. Then he took me to show me around, and he wanted me to read to him and play with him. He asked me about the academy, so I let him wear my hat. I also gave him a pin to remember me, and we drew pictures with each other. "It was a great experience. I used to enjoy experiences like that with my little brothers, and I felt as if I had a little brother again."

Lamar Greenwood enjoyed calling H-E-A-R-T Bingo for the children. "It felt good helping other people," Greenwood said. "When it was time to go, I didn't want to leave. I could tell the kids were happy because of all the smiling and laughing they were doing. The kids got great joy out of something simple, like the Bingo game. It doesn't take much to make kids happy if you spend time with them."

Ruangtragool echoed Greenwood's opinion.

"I felt that the interaction with the kids provided happiness for everyone," he said. The event was organized by Ms. Lyn Berry, ANA English teacher and Interact Club advisor. Ms. Berry's chocolate Labrador retriever, Maya, also accompanied the group, much to the delight of the children.

This is the second visit ANA cadets have volunteered their time at Operation Hope. In October, with the assistance of ANA chef Jeff Bovee, they provided a meal for shelter residents. In addition to setting up and serving the food, cadets had an opportunity to have dinner with the residents and learn more about their circumstances. As a result of these experiences, the cadets have decided to make Operation Hope an ongoing project.

Founded in 1910, the Army and Navy Academy is a private not-for-profit institution that provides an academically robust, character-based education for 7th- through 12th-grade young men. It is the only private boarding school in San Diego County and the only military academy for high school-age students in California and surrounding states.

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