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Teen Volunteerism Warms Up the Winter

By Andrew Wang



String chamber group Jacob Ngai, Cary Huang, Andrew Wang, Alicia Kim, Soha Sadeghinejad, Michael Huang, Brian Davis, Will Gu play in front of the Orinda Library. Photo provided

Along with the frosty weather of the winter holiday season and the freshly thawed New Year came sources of familiar warmth: friends warmed their fingers by the fireplace enjoying a steaming cup of hot chocolate as soothing holiday tunes played on the radio. But what really completed the picture for local teens was their dedication to community service, in the spirit of giving back for the holidays. The holiday season is a time for celebration and cheer, but also a time to pay respects to the community, to help the sick and provide relief to other communities affected by recent disasters.

Over winter break, a group of Campolindo High School students, Jacob Ngai, Alicia Kim, Soha Sadeghinejad, Michael Huang, Cary Huang, Brian Davis, William Gu and myself, decided to make the most of this spirit of giving. Under the wing of local literacy charity Be the Star You Are, which has been promoting literacy and distributing books since 1999, the local teens performed as a string chamber group, playing holiday tunes in front of the Orinda Library. The enthusiastic group was pleased to make passing families smile in recognition of familiar jingles, from "O Little Town of Bethlehem" to "Joy to the World." They even provided shakers for eager toddler audience members who wanted to add their own flair to the music. Most

importantly, these caring teens raised money for Operation Disaster Relief, which donated over 2,000 brand new books to children affected by the recent tornadoes in the Midwest.

"It was a pleasure to make kids smile through our playing," says Ngai, "and to know that we would make even more kids smile through the books we helped supply for Christmas."

The goal was to be able to get a new book to the thousands of children negatively affected by the recent natural disaster. We were impressed by the generosity of community members' contributions.

Other teens used their winter break to help the local community in other ways, some aiding the injured and ill at Kaiser Permanente and John Muir Medical Center, others inspiring a love of books at local libraries. Avan Chu, a junior at Miramonte High School, volunteered at the Orinda Library. During the holiday break he routed books across the county in time for Christmas and the new school season. "The best part of my job is knowing that I am helping deliver knowledge to little kids," he reflects. "That's the best gift of all." Whether promoting a lifelong love of reading or just making someone smile for a day, teens made the best of their break time to contribute to the community and beyond.

Teen Scene is YOUR voice. If you have something to say or have writing skills and want to be part of our Teen Scene team, email our Teen Coach, Cynthia Brian, Cynthia@CynthiaBrian.com.

The opinions expressed in Teen Scene are those of the writer and not necessarily those of the Lamorinda Weekly.



Andrew Wang, the Director of Concerts for Be the Star You Are! charity, is a student at Campolindo High School. Besides writing and reporting, he enjoys programming, playing the piano and violin, and tossing a good hammer throw on his Frisbee. Check Lamorinda Weekly's "Not to Be Missed" section for upcoming free concerts offered by local teens..

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