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## Orinda Academy Service Projects Benefit the Community

*Submitted by Laura Turnbull*



Smiles abounded following a successful Orinda Academy toy drive Photos provided

educational opportunities for girls. Each bottle collected throughout the school year represents a nickel for the organization, and has netted \$80 to date. Dylan was inspired to create this project after watching the film "Girl Rising." Dylan explains, "To us a bottle is a piece of trash. To a girl in the developing world, money earned from recycling that single bottle can mean a step towards a brighter future."

The Orinda Academy Community Action Club conducted a shoe drive, collecting 108 pairs of shoes to benefit Soles4Souls (soles4souls.org), a global nonprofit that provides shoes for people in need in 127 countries. The club also collected 156 toys and \$160 in cash donations for the Central American Refugee Committee (CRECE). The toys will be distributed to children of refugee families from Central American countries living in Oakland.

On Dec. 17, Environmental Science teacher Vicky Guarracino led students on a field trip hosted by the East Bay Municipal Utility District where students planted buckeye and willow trees to help restore former pasturelands and rehabilitate the watershed along a creek. Freshman Emma summed up the experience: "It's so cool because we are actually helping to create a habitat and restoring it for animals that couldn't live there before." Freshman Alex added, "And we got to keep a cow skull that we found!"

On the last day of school before the holiday break, students and staff members created handmade holiday cards and baked and decorated cookies and delivered them to residents of the Orinda Rehabilitation and Convalescent Hospital, just down the street from the school. Students and staff visited with residents and had had a great time delivering goodies. Sophomore Joseph enthused, "It was great! It just makes me feel so good. It really wasn't much, but sometimes the littlest things can really make someone's day."

"I'm so proud of our students, and in particular, (of) their initiative and hard work," said Ron Graydon, head of school. "All of this charitable work is organized and carried out by students. There is such a strong spirit of giving and caring about others among our students and their families here at Orinda Academy. Their energy and hard work is really impressive."



Orinda Academy Environmental Science teacher Vicky Guarracino led students on a field trip Dec. 17 hosted by the East Bay Municipal Utility District to plant trees to help restore and rehabilitate the watershed.

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