



NCMS students give gift of play

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Think of one of your happiest moments as a child. It is likely that the memory you have conjured up includes play. That's because playing is normal for children. It's a vital part of a child's life and growth.

Giving the gift of play is the desire and motivation that drives the New Castle Middle School Student Council to collect toys, place them in shoe boxes and deliver them to Riley Children's Hospital in Indianapolis.

The students are endeavoring to lift the spirits of chronically ill children by participating in the "Jared Box Project." The plastic shoe boxes are stuffed to the brim with age-appropriate toys and games. Students have challenged themselves to collect and prepare 100 Jared Boxes before the end of the school year. So far, they have completed 54.

Kim Mathis, Middle School math teacher, and Karen Bimber, counselor, are faculty coordinators of the project. Mathis and Bimber also oversee com-

munity service projects for the student body, as each student must complete two hours of service during the school year.

The Jared Box Project was established in 2000 by Our Lady of Victory School in State College, Pa., to honor a special five-year-old who was battling cancer. Jared lost his battle Nov. 12, 2000, and his mother established the Jared Box Project as an ongoing memorial for her son.

According to the Jared's mother, during his treatments he never lost his sense of humor and the joys of childhood. Jared carried a backpack full of toys and games to all of his appointments and could never understand why the other children didn't do the same. The toys gave him a connection to home, childhood and a touch of normalcy and hope.

"Many students have been collecting money for Riley at their elementary schools," said Mathis. "This project gives them an opportunity to step up to another level and produce a product that will benefit the kids at See **PLAY** Page A3



Kevin Miller (l-r), Brandon Bell and Nick Masters of New Castle Middle School sort toys according to age. (C-T photo John Guglielmi)

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PLAY: Students pack toys for Riley

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Riley and make them smile.”

According to Mathis, students in the middle school are very compassionate and want to help, but they don't always see the benefits of community service. The Jared Box Project gives them an opportunity to do something they really enjoy and to see the results.

Student fundraisers in the school have included Hat Day, Super Hero Day, Trojan Day and Shorts Day. If the student body paid \$1 to the student council, they were allowed to wear the funny hats, super hero garb or even shorts to school that day. The money raised was split between American Red Cross and the Jared Box Project.

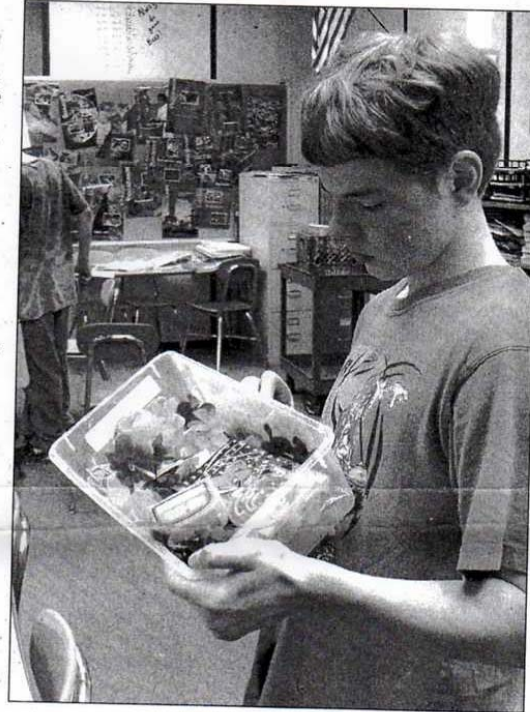
Five students — Chelsea Barricks, Jennifer Hoopingarner, Kevin Miller, Brad Upchurch and Cody Wood — shopped for toys to fill the boxes. Students were given an age group and gender of a child and were allowed to choose items for the boxes.

When the assembly of boxes is complete, several students will accompany Mathis to Riley Children's Hospital and be able to actually give the shoe-sized treasures to children who are currently undergoing treatment.

Since the Jared Project began, over 10,000 boxes have been made and delivered to hospitals and doctors' offices in 21 states.

Teachers at the Middle School have collected money to help with the purchase of boxes and toys, books and art supplies. The project is still ongoing and will continue until the end of the school year.

For those who would like to contribute, take monetary donations, toys or shoe-sized plastic boxes to the New Castle Middle School office or



At top, Allison Cotton and Shianne Cosby select items for their boxes. And above, Nick Masters labels his box. (C-T photos John Guglielmi)

send contributions with a Middle School student to be given to Mathis or Bimber.

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