

Spreading Holiday Cheer...and Cookies

The holiday season is truly a time when the spirit of Christmas shows itself. Everywhere we turn these days there are Christmas trees, wrapped presents, holiday sales, and candy canes. The hustle and bustle of department stores plays out to the soft crooning of Bing Crosby and Nat King Cole. For many of us, the aroma of fresh-baked holiday cookies brings a feeling

reminiscent of home and reminds us that we will be spending the season with our loved ones. But there are many uniformed men and women at Davis-Monthan Air Force Base who won't be spending the holidays at home with their



families. To give them a little taste of being home for the holidays, the United Way Young Leaders Society (YLS) came together to send our troops holiday cookies. This is the second year in a row for this home-baked mission by the YLS, and the gift was made possible thanks to the generosity of dozens of friends from the Tucson community.

The fun started Friday afternoon at Frances Owen Holaway Elementary School where pounds of cookie dough were transformed into holiday cookies. This undertaking wasn't completed by Santa's little elves, but by YLS volunteers and Holaway fifth grade students. The kids loved getting a little messy for a great cause. They rolled out the dough, cut out the Christmas shapes, and filled up dozens of cookie sheets, all with a smile and flour-dusted cheeks. The students enjoyed making the different shapes of cookies and you could see the pride and accomplishment on their faces when they presented each filled tray of cut-out holiday treats to their YLS friends.

The students also created festive holiday cards for the servicemen and women at Davis-Monthan. As YLS members helped the students cut out edible stockings, Santas, and holiday bells, they were also able to offer support and mentorship to the children at Holaway. The students talked about their homework assignments and shared what was on their Christmas wish lists, among other things.

“We had a blast with the students,” said Tara Traver, chair of the YLS Marketing Subcommittee. “The students created many sincere holiday cards for the troops, thanking them for their service and wishing them a happy holiday. I think that this special day touched the hearts of the teachers, students, and most of all the Young Leaders Society volunteers.”

On the following Saturday morning, nearly 40 YLS members and community volunteers decorated the cookies with the senior residents of St. Luke’s Home. The YLS volunteers provided the frosting, sprinkles, and



just about every other cookie decoration imaginable. Conversation and laughter filled the sprucely decorated commons room as the intergenerational groups turned the blank cookies into special holiday treats. Smiles were seen across the room, and the eyes of many residents twinkled as they watched the young volunteers use their imaginations to create one-of-a-kind holiday masterpieces.

“This was a great opportunity for the Young Leaders to share in the spirit of the holiday season with a group of generous seniors and enthusiastic volunteers,” said Michael Cleveland, Young Leaders Society Committee Co-Chair. “It is also a very humbling to know that our cookies will be shared with the troops who are serving our country at Davis-Monthan.”

It was a joy to just stand back and watch the St. Luke's residents enjoy the morning festivities. Not all senior citizens are able to enjoy spending the holiday season with loved ones, but on Saturday morning YLS volunteers were able to give the residents of St. Luke's the gift of love and companionship. Walking around the tables, you could hear the seniors telling the kids about what Christmas was like when they were growing up. Their shared laughter, stories, and hugs contained the true value of the gift of love and friendship during the holiday season. All involved enjoyed spending the morning as a family as they came together to make the season a little brighter for the men and women who serve our country. The group decorated nearly 1,000 cookies for our troops at Davis-Monthan.

"The Young Leaders Society event at St. Luke's home was a great success because it demonstrated the power of volunteering with multiple generations to help others for the common good, specifically the troops at Davis Monthan Air Force base," stated Julie Wolfe Beadle, Vice President of Resource Development and the Young Leaders Society. "We hope our tins of holiday cookies provide some holiday cheer and a morale boost to our servicemen and women at Davis-Monthan, who we are so very proud of."

With a little help from their friends at Holaway Elementary and St. Luke's Home, the Young Leaders Society was able to thank our noble servicemen and women at Davis-Monthan and make their Christmas a little bit sweeter.