

Santa's Children Christmas Village



Orien Hodges spoke at the Treynor Optimist Club on Saturday about Santa's Children Christmas Village. He has been doing Santa Visits for 13 years. Santa's Village focuses on children with serious and life threatening illnesses.

Santa's Village moved to Macedonia in 2004 and 27,882 hours of volunteer time have been invested there. In October 2009, as part of the University of Nebraska at Omaha three days of service program, youth from Treynor, Riverside, Lewis Central, and Omaha North High Schools, contributed over 1300 hours in volunteer time working on Santa's Village. They repaired and painted the entry way, main hall on the first floor, three walls in the gym, the locker rooms, stairway, and two rooms.

Last year Santa's Village sponsored Christmas parties and Santa Visits for over 1500 children and their families. They included children in Children's Hospital, Nishna Valley School, Muscular Dystrophy Association, Open Door Mission, Children's Square, and other children in need.

AmeriServe International, which supports persons with special needs throughout their life, started bringing 4-5 clients to the Village on Tuesdays in 2009 and have provided over 560 hours to the KIDS Program and general cleaning. The KIDS program provides free

clothing, books, and toys to children in highly stressed situations.

Two intern CASS students from Iowa Western Community College volunteered in May and June last year to start a two acre garden program. The garden produced over 10,000 pounds of food that was given to individuals and families through food pantries and social service organizations, including Micah House, Mohms Place, Boys and Girls Clubs, AmeriServe International, In Jesus Name Services, Youth Care and Beyond, Omaha Salvation Army, and Open Door Mission.

Some Riverside classes went to the garden to sort potatoes by color, put them in bags, and take some back to school to clean and eat. They also saw a beaver dam at the garden pond.

Santa's Village has given over 12,000 books to Children's Hospital, Nebraska Medical Center, Open Door Mission, MICA House, Children's Square, and many other children during Santa Visits.

Santa's Children Christmas Village began a Day Camp program in 2007. They had 27 campers in 2007, 168 in 2008, and 439 in 2009. They are expecting 700-800 in 2010.

Orien spent last week at Camp Courageous last week, being trained as a volunteer in all activities at the camp. Camp Courageous is in Monticello, Iowa and serves over 5000 children each year with special needs. The Santa's Village day camp program is being modeled similar to the Camp Courageous program.

Santa's Village is always looking for volunteers, helping with repairs, the garden, and especially for Christmas parties and Santa's Visits in Macedonia, Iowa. If you can help for a few hours, please call 712-486-2599. More information is also available at their temporary website at treynoroptimist.org/SC.