



Food Brings Hope students treated to dinner, concert

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Santa Claus waves to the students as he arrives at their Christmas dinner in the Student Center at Daytona State College.

DAYTONA BEACH

Food Brings Hope treated nearly 400 students Dec. 6 to Daytona State College's Holiday Concert at The News-Journal Center.

Volusia County School children who participate in FBH's Kids Zone / Teen Zone after school program enjoyed dinner and dessert sponsored by Sodexo in DSC's Student Center. Members of the DSC women's volleyball team volunteered to serve the meal. After dinner, Santa Claus joined the party and posed for pictures. Later, students were transported by school busses to the News-Journal Center to enjoy the holiday concert.

FBH, a local charity dedicated to breaking the hunger and poverty cycle among Volusia County school children, offers programming in 10 area schools, nine of which participated Friday evening. They included Pierson, Starke, T.T. Small and Westside elementary schools; New Smyrna Beach and Campbell middle schools, New Smyrna Beach and Mainland high schools and Taylor Middle High School.

George Perez, a fourth-grader at Pierson Elementary, said he was excited to participate in the festivities because, "I get to celebrate Christmas earlier."

Emonie Youmans, a fourth-grader at Westside, said, "I love the pretty decorations."

Perhaps one of the more poignant comments from the group was a quote from Thomas Lester, a Pierson fifth-grader, who said he loved coming to the FBH sponsored events because, "We get respect and everything."

Lisa Zavota is the project director for Westside Night Alive and Campbell Night Alive after school programs, which also are part of the FBH initiative. This was the third time she accompanied a group of students to this FBH sponsored evening.

"This is a wonderful event because our student get to experience something they normally wouldn't be exposed to," she said. "Before we left school, we explained that they would hear music performed by people who were very talented and worked very hard and that we should all respect their accomplishments. You can actually see the music having a physically calming influence."

"In addition to providing the core elements of food, tutoring and a rewards system to students in need, we also place a high priority on what we refer to as 'enrichment activities' like this evening with DSC," said Forough Hosseini, founder and chair of FBH. "We have found that exposing at-risk children to cultural events provides them with perspective that they may never have received otherwise. And in doing so, we believe we present meaningful new goals for the students to strive for - in their studies and in their every day lives."

Hosseini, who also serves on the DSC Board of Trustees, added, "Having the dinner portion of the evening on the DSC campus is deliberate. We are showing our students that college isn't scary or elusive. It's right here, within their reach."