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Santa talks and laughs with children Tuesday evening at Washington Elementary School as he gifted each one of the kids for Christmas an illustrated reading book to take home. L&T photos/Giseelle Arredondo

By GISEELLE ARREDONDO

• Leader & Times

Santa Claus walked around the stage with an audience overflowing with children filling up on cookies and apple cider in awe of him reading a colorful, illustrated book.

Shortly after, Santa sat on his chair while all the children made a bee-line for him, and after a hug and a smile, Santa gave each child a reading book to take home Tuesday night at Washington Elementary School.

President of Rotary Club Jim Karlan noted that giving kids gifts has been a longtime tradition with the club.

“We’ve been doing this for many years. I’ve been in Rotary a long time. I’ve been in it 30 years,” he said.



He noted that before, the event included only a few number of children.

“Basically, we have been having a certain number of the children from here who are preschoolers come forward to our meetings on Tuesdays and we would give them a meal – usually pizza and some sort of drink, and then we would distribute different presents to them, but because of limitations of space, we could only accomodate about 60 kids.”

Thus, the event for gift giving for the children moved to a different building in hopes to accomodate more kids. And to open the event to more kids who are “just as deserving – and invite their parents.”

This year is the first year at Washington and “as you can see, it’s organized chaos the first time.” Karlan said and laughed. “We are all taking notes for the next meeting as to how we and the school will massage things and change.

“I’m very happy to be here representing Rotary. We just love seeing these kids, their eyes light up when they see Santa, and then this year, we decided to give them each a book,” he added. “I’m not sure how many children are here tonight, but we thought probably at least double or triple the number... over at the country club, we could only have about 50 or 60.”

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