

**Speech Prepared by Sheri Smith**  
**School Counselor at G. W. Carver Elementary School**  
**Representing Counselors from Three Other Salem Elementary Schools.**

I volunteered to be the elementary representative today to express our appreciation for the support the Rotary Club members provide our students and their families during the holidays.

Eight of our families, two from each school, will have a Thanksgiving meal delivered to them next Wednesday on behalf of this club and several gracious volunteers. Thank you to Mike Mayo for working with us to provide this blessing.

And on December 14, 40 of our students, 10 from each school will arrive to participate in a very special Christmas party organized and implemented by this club and its members. I personally have had the pleasure of attending this party for the past few years and have thoroughly enjoyed the feeling of excitement and awe that results. I'm honestly not sure who is having more fun, the children or the volunteers. It is truly a wonderful event.

Students arrive anxious and ready. They are served breakfast as they get to know their assigned volunteer for the day and then they are off to shop at Walmart, a treat in and of itself. This is where the true magic begins. Children diligently pick up gifts for family members while volunteers patiently guide and help. Upon returning to the Senior Center, they work together to wrap and tag the gifts with care. Once things are wrapped up, the children partake in arts and crafts activities and songs while eating lunch until Santa makes an appearance with his helpers in tow. Each child receives a special moment to sit with Santa and receive a stocking full of gifts, smiles and hugs galore.

You, the volunteers who run this party, are amazing people and you are a very special reason why some of our students will have a joyous holiday. Each child has his/her own story as to why they were chosen to attend. Please know that we are deeply appreciative of you, your time and your thoughtfulness . . . you have touched many hearts. Parents arrive during the pick-up with smiles and tears of thanks. Students arrive back at school after the holidays with heart-warming stories of Christmas morning; many excited to show off new clothes or tell about their favorite toy or experience. And you are often a reason for the joy they share.

Each year, I read the book *Have You Filled A Bucket Today?* to every class at the start of the year. The rest of the year, my students learn and practice how to be "bucket-fillers." This is a quote from the book:

*You fill a bucket when you show love to someone, when you say or do something kind, or even when you give someone a smile.  
That's being a bucket-filler.  
A bucket-filler is a loving, caring person who says or does nice things that make others feel special.  
When you make someone feel special you are filling a bucket.*

...  
*When you're a bucket-filler, you make your home, your school, and your  
neighborhood better places to be.  
Bucket filling makes everyone feel good.*

I can honestly say, the buckets at the Salem Elementary Schools are overflowing!! May the holiday bring you great joy for you are our bucket fillers!! We wish each of you a very Happy Holiday and Thank you very much!!