

**From:** Superintendent  
**Sent:** Tuesday, December 18, 2012 12:09 PM  
**To:** EPS.MailList  
**Subject:** Holiday wishes

Dear colleague,

This is the time of year we see more than the usual examples of students enacting the district mission to “contribute to our community.” This is the time of year students lead collection efforts at many of our schools on behalf of needy families.

Cascade High’s students beat last year’s record for the number of canned food items gathered – up this year to 94,687 from 87,000 last year. They brought in \$22,021 in cash donations for families, compared to \$21,800 last year.

Jackson High’s foyer hallway was stocked sky high with food donations for the school’s food bank that students operate in partnership with the city of Mill Creek and Volunteers of America.

Everett High’s holiday food drive gathered enough to supply 203 families this season and help stock the shelves of the St. Vincent de Paul and Housing Hope food banks – and the school’s own, new food bank. EHS students also gathered more than \$13,000 in cash donations.

Sequoia students have been gathering both food and winter coats for those in need; their final tally of generously gathered nutrition and warmth will be available tomorrow.

Our high school students learn these giving habits because of similar activities coordinated at elementary and middle schools. The simple experience of a penny drive can inspire a budding philanthropist.

This holiday season, we cannot help but be saddened by the tragedy at Sandy Hook Elementary in Connecticut. It worries us; it concerns us; it creates fear in us. And at the same time, it reminds us that every day is a gift – a gift we should recognize, we should cherish, and we should celebrate as we count our blessings. In tragedy we also find hope, and often inspiration and heroism.

Last week Everett High Principal Sally Lancaster received a magnificent note about some of our students’ gifts that extend beyond our own locale. While this note is about the marvelous and thoughtful acts of a small group of our students, you and I know it well represents our schools, our families and the work you do to foster responsible, giving young people who will lead and shape a better future. Here is an excerpt of that note from a neighboring community member whose life was touched by our young people:

I am the evening manager at Gold Bar Family Grocer in Gold Bar, WA. Not quite two weeks ago 30+ students in your high school choir took a rest stop at our store. It was later in the evening, business was slow, and we were counting the minutes until closing time. Your group was headed home from an event in

Leavenworth where they had performed. They were cold, tired and all had to go (use the facilities). Our store has only one restroom per gender, so this took some time.

I must tell you that I have never seen a more good-humored, patient and well-behaved group of young people in all my years, and my years have been many. As I was thinking, what a great group of kids they are, the bus driver told me that the group would like to sing a song for us in appreciation.

So, after an already very long day, I'm sure, and a long wait in line at the restrooms, they gathered around our customer service counter in good cheer and performed a lively Christmas song with profound enthusiasm and professionalism.

And then two more songs, ending with *Silent Night*, sung so sweetly there were no dry eyes behind that counter. Your choir of angels touched all our hearts, with much more than their beautiful voices.

Whether you celebrate Christmas, Chanukah, Kwanzaa, or another holiday with your family this season, what better way to wish you well as we enter a much-deserved holiday break, than to share this message with you.

With warm regards, pride in our work and joy in working with you in our Everett Public Schools,

Gary