

COMMUNITY FORUM

A Christmas season filled with immeasurable joy



MARTHA LEMASTERS

Looking back over Christmases past, I recall one incident that left a feeling of shame and humiliation.

I had a cleaning woman who came to help me around the house once a week. As my daughter and her family arrived for the Christmas holiday my housekeeper took me aside and asked if my son-in-law was Jewish.

I replied, "Yes, indeed, he is Jewish and an absolutely wonderful husband and father to my grandchild too."

Following that explanation, she then refused to wash his clothes when they readied to leave for their trip home. I was so ashamed and humiliated by her actions but even more so by the fact that she called herself a Christian.

Needless to say, she did not work for me after that incident.

Yet, here we are today with those who refuse to serve gays who simply want a wedding cake, or issue a marriage license

to gays for which it is their paid job to do so.

Dear friends, it's called HATE, pure and simple.

Love is the foundation of Christianity. The injunction to love, even your enemies, established by Christ Jesus, is not merely a commandment, but the enunciation of a divine principle that involves happiness to the one who follows it.

Hate is sometimes confused with justice and righteousness, and works under those guises. But it never brings joy or satisfaction.

"God is love; to love is to express God, and as God is eternal life, if we always loved we should always express life, and never have a belief in death. Hate is the opposite of love, and leads to death; therefore never hate anything."

These words, "Never hate anything," are recorded in a book entitled, "We Knew Mary Baker Eddy," as a student's recollection made by the founder of Christian Science to the members of her class in 1888.

This admonition helps us to recognize that hate, as love's opposite, cannot exist

in love's presence. It involves the reversal of negative and unlovely thoughts, such as fear, resentment, bullying, contempt, prejudice, disdain, rejection, aversion, intolerance, dislike and hostility.

Christ Jesus taught his disciples (Matt): "Ye have heard that it hath been said, thou shalt love thy neighbor, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, love your enemies."

Eddy clearly explains, "Love thine enemies," is identical with "Thou hast no enemies."

The source of such love is God. Since God, divine love, is everywhere, there is no place where good is not. God does not hate. And if God is everywhere, where is hate?

Divine love nullifies the belief of hate. Eddy writes, "Divine love knows no hate; for hate or the hater, is nothing: God never made it, and He made all that was made."

If we have taken on board the belief that someone is worth hating, we are knowingly or unknowingly suffering for it. We only need to ask ourselves if we believe that God, love, is hating. The idea

that love could hate is such a contradiction that it is clearly impossible.

But how is it that God cannot hate something that seems to us appalling? The answer is that love, which has created all in its likeness, could never have created, and therefore does not know anything other than what is totally lovable.

That, which seems so appalling, then has no real substance or power. By loving, by reflecting divine love, we progressively disarm the belief in hate.

The real man created by divine love, cannot be hated. This is true of both the one who appears to be the hater and the one who seems hated.

Let us look up and behold the Christ at Christmas. Let our thoughts be filled with the infinity of God.

Then the Christmas season is filled with immeasurable joy because our time is used in praising God, and on earth peace and good will toward men.

Martha Lemasters is a member of the First Church of Christ, Scientist Vero Beach, one of the oldest churches in Indian River County.



Cindy Goetz, Janie Graves Hoover, Miss Hibiscus Gabi McFall and Travaeh Woolfork. PROVIDED BY CINDY GOETZ

Fairy Tale dream comes true for GYAC student

ANGELIA PERRY

Wearing a pretty new Christmas dress and a sparkly tiara on her head, Travaeh Woolfork, felt just like a princess.

Christmas had come early for this Gifford Youth Achievement Center student when she was asked to ride with Miss Hibiscus in the recent Ocean Drive Christmas Parade.



Angelia Perry

Miss Hibiscus Pageant Chair Cindy Goetz invited Travaeh to accompany her, the reigning 2017 Miss Hibiscus Gabi McFall and Hibiscus Festival Chair Janie Graves Hoover in a brand new, white Genesis along the Ocean Drive parade route.

Goetz, who is an independent makeup artist and sales director of a major cosmetic company, has won the hearts of many of the young pageant contestants as well as the children of the GYAC. Last year she led a huge toy drive with 20 of her friends for the center and has promoted the current drive on her radio show, "Beauty and the Beach."

"Every girl should feel like a princess," said Goetz. "Riding in the parade with Miss Hibiscus is a magical experience and I wanted to give that opportunity to a deserving young child for Christmas."

Goetz has been encouraging the students at GYAC to participate in the

Main Street Vero Beach contest and Travaeh's mother, Sandra Jackson Woolfork, said it has certainly piqued her two daughters' interest. They will have to wait until they are 15-years-old but Woolfork believes she will not forget the experience.

"She was so excited," said Woolfork laughing. "She told me 'Mommy, there were two princesses, me and Miss Hibiscus.' She could not stop talking about it and loved it when people would say they saw her picture on Facebook. It builds a child's confidence to participate in these kinds of experiences and may make her want to apply for opportunities like this in the future."

The Miss Hibiscus Pageant can be highly beneficial to young students, teaching girls public speaking, poise and etiquette as well as providing local visibility. The lasting benefits are immeasurable.

Although Travaeh may not choose to go on and enter the Miss Hibiscus Pageant one day, for now, her Christmas just became a little merrier. Making dreams come true for children is what Gifford Youth Achievement Center is all about and it is with their treasured partners that we hope to make that happen.

The Gifford Youth Achievement Center is located at 4875 43rd Avenue. To contact them or to donate toys for the Gifford Toy Drive call 772-794-1005.

Angelia Perry is the Executive Director of Gifford Youth Achievement Center.



GETTY IMAGES

Cooking program teaches elementary students life skills

BENJAMIN NUNNALLY
THE GADSDEN TIMES

GADSDEN, Ala. – Historically, kids have not fought to the front of the line to do dishes, clean up after themselves or eat their fruits and vegetables.

But somehow, that's exactly what kids at Donehoo Elementary in Gadsden did the afternoon of Nov. 16 as part of their after-school program. Imagination Place Director Holly Guinn and museum educator Shawntay Gray hosted an installment of "Edible Education," an outreach program introducing kids to better nutrition and making better food choices for themselves and their families.

Second- and third-graders were taught how to cut tomatoes into fourths with safety knives, shred cheese and chop basil on cutting boards at their desks, and then how to pour a mixture of ingredients onto bread to make bruschetta, a simple, Italian appetizer baked for 10 minutes in one of Gadsden City Schools' two new portable kitchen units. Some of the kids said that they'd never tasted tomatoes before and weren't sure what to expect.

"I've seen kids taste bananas, spinach and black olives for the first time," said Guinn. "Some had never seen black olives, didn't even know what one looked like."

Guinn said new foods usually are met with suspicion, but within a few days of beginning the 16-session program, students are ready to give any weird thing a try.

"By Day Four they're like, 'We're going to try just about anything she puts in front of us, because it's been good so far,'" said Guinn.

Baking and plating is fairly simple with the portable kitchen units, which are full-featured for their size. Each has a metal tabletop that folds out to serve as a work area, a regular and convection oven, an electric range that Guinn said will only operate when a metal pan is placed on it (and almost immediately cools when a pan is removed, making it more kid-safe) and a kitchen sink, supplied with water filtered by the unit as it

pipes it up from storage tanks. All of that fits into hardware about the size of a hot-dog cart.

While the bread baked, restless kids volunteered to clean up around their work areas, wash and dry dishes and sanitize desks. The few who weren't picked for a cleanup detail were a little upset with the decision, having been so eager to be part of any and every activity.

One of the program's goals is that the kids have fun while they learn, according to Hector Baeza, federal programs director for Gadsden City Schools.

"When we were kids, there was a stigma that if you were staying after school, you were in trouble," he said. "That's the stigma we're working to erase. We want after-school to be something the kids are looking forward to."

The program lasts about a month, with those 16 sessions broken up over four weeks, each focusing on a different dish. Though younger students were cooking, the program usually caters to fourth- and fifth-graders, at Donehoo and at Striplin and Adams Elementary schools, which Guinn and Gray visited in previous months.

Students learn about measuring ingredients and how to divide the finished meals between people in the room. They have to keep an eye on the clock while food cooks, and sanitize their work areas before they eat. Parents come to class to work with their children on the last day of the program, and students can show off what they've learned.

Susan Andrew, community education coordinator for Gadsden City Schools, called the program a "STEAM" course — taking the science, technology, engineering and mathematics of "STEM" and adding the arts to the mix — citing the variety of real-world applications learned from cooking simple dishes.

The kids, for their part, loved the experience. One girl shouted, "I'm Gordon Ramsay!" Another pair, a little boy and girl, shared a high-five while they tried out their bruschetta.

"Good job cooking today, chef," said the boy.

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