

INDIAN RIVER COUNTY



Santa pauses for a group photo with GYAC's 4th grade class. STEPHANIE NELSON PHOTOS

GYAC celebrates Christmas

Stephanie Nelson

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VERO BEACH — It's no secret that many families were feeling an extra crunch on their wallets this Christmas due to pandemic pressures, so the Gifford Youth Achievement Center wanted to make Christmas a go for the center's 80 after school students and 80 homebound seniors.

Due to yearslong partnerships with local donors and organizations and a few new partnerships, Christmas brought joy, presents and homecooked meals.

Keeping with tradition, GYAC students were treated to their annual Christmas party, complete with games, crafts and food. Santa made a special appearance to present a gift to each and every student.

Theresa Baxter, GYAC's senior programs coordinator, prepared, packaged and delivered home cooked meals with elves, Jemel Baxter and LaJohnathan Harris. With the community's help, Baxter was able to assemble and distribute more than 50 gift bags filled with toiletries, nonperishables, snacks and a few comfort items to local homebound seniors.

"We are thankful for the opportunity to offer comfort and joy, despite the challenges of COVID-19, and look forward to the time when we can all gather together once again," said Barbara Pearce, GYAC executive assistant.

For more information: gyac.net.



Barbara Pearce, Gifford Youth Achievement Center executive assistant, accepts a donation from Chef Michael Gratz, owner of Coffee House 1420.



Robbie Walker and Ellen Flanagan delivered Christmas presents for students in Gifford Youth Achievement Center after school program, on behalf of St. Paul's Church.