

**3200 ITEMS COLLECTED
FOR FOOD BANK**

**COMMUNITY CHRISTMAS
DINNER TURKEY AND
TRIMMINGS**

**CHRISTMAS FAYRE RAISES
MONEY FOR MACMILLAN**

**LAUREN CROOT MAKES THE
COUNTY TEAM**



**“EDUCATION IS NOT JUST ABOUT
QUALIFICATIONS - IT’S ABOUT BUILDING
SKILLS AND RELATIONSHIPS”
SAYS
DARREN GELDER
PRINCIPAL, GRACE ACADEMY**

PRINCIPAL'S VIEWPOINT

“A TIME FOR SHARING”



Christmas is that time when people get together, and at Grace we share that spirit, not just at Christmas, but throughout the year. I have always said that we are a community school, and I stand by this more than ever. We take our role as part of the community seriously and engender it into many of the activities and events that we have.

We are just tidying away after our Community Christmas Dinner which is now an annual event for the more mature of our community.

The Christmas Dinner just gets better and better and this year we had over 100 local residents who were entertained and accompanied by our students. The importance of events such as this is the learning experience it brings for the young people of the Academy. Sat watching them talk to people who have life experiences that go way beyond the 'tech orientated' world we live in, is an amazing sight to behold.

Our Remembrance Day event, Summer Fayre, productions, musicals, sporting events, parent education courses and Christmas Fayre are all community based and are only successful due to the support and input from the community. Our recent tin drive resulted in three van loads of food going to Renewal's Helping Hands Food Bank and Birmingham City Mission, so that families in less fortunate circumstances in the local area can receive food parcels over Christmas; another example of how we put into action our ethos and vision. We have made a commitment to providing the best education and, this year, we were yet again the most improved Academy in the region, as well as the highest performing in the area. **However, education is not just about qualifications - it's about building skills and relationships and our community role exemplifies this perfectly.**

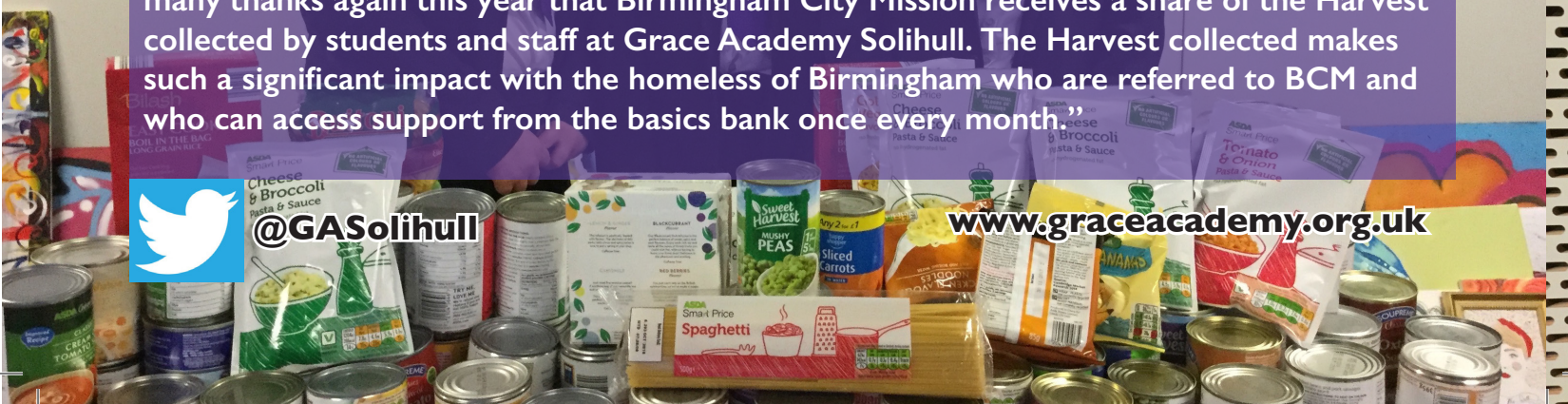
OVER 3200 FOOD AND SUNDRY ITEMS COLLECTED FOR FOOD BANKS

Students from Years 7 to Post 16 spent three weeks collecting 3200 food and sundry items to donate to Birmingham City Mission and Renewal's Helping Hands Food Bank. Matt Loader, Youth and Schools worker at Birmingham City Mission, said, "It is with many thanks again this year that Birmingham City Mission receives a share of the Harvest collected by students and staff at Grace Academy Solihull. The Harvest collected makes such a significant impact with the homeless of Birmingham who are referred to BCM and who can access support from the basics bank once every month."



@GASolihull

www.graceacademy.org.uk



COMMUNITY CHRISTMAS DINNER



Student helper Daniel Smith, Year 10, said, "It's good to help out the community and a good experience to know how the older generation's life has been. Being a helper makes you get out of your comfort zone."

Turkey with all the trimmings, Christmas pudding, and a healthy serving of The Nativity performed by students, helped 100 elderly residents to share in the festive cheer this Christmas. Age UK also added to the community spirit with a chocolate hamper raffle prize to raise money for the charity.

Darren Gelder, Principal of Grace Academy who regularly collects elderly residents by bus for community events in the school, said, "Our school is in the heart of the community, so we believe we have a duty of care as one of the largest organisations in the area. It's quite an ageing community, with not a lot going on for some residents, so we have a moral duty to help people get connected. The feedback from our events has been phenomenal and, as a school, it is great to see the different generations coming through.

"On the educational side, our recent Remembrance Day event helped students to find out more about the war from elderly survivors, learning more, first hand, about the things people suffered such as rationing. These are experiences we cannot recreate in school like people being forced to be in air raid shelters while bombs were dropping. These events also have the added benefit of bridging generational gaps and, in this tech-savvy world, students have a real interest in the older generation's life and experiences which is great.

"It's all about making our students aware of the world around them, and the challenges other people have to live with in our diverse society. Having food on the table is not the norm for everyone. We want to be at the point where people look to us as a community facility and asset, and the numbers of students offering to help with our activities is a testament to parents and carers, as well as showing the school cares about people around them."



Beryl Keating, aged 83, said, "We've been looking forward to this for weeks. Lots of them are on their own and Grace Academy are so good to us pensioners. No one else bothers with us."

DREW HOLMES DESIGNS WINNING CHRISTMAS CARD



"I entered the competition because I like to draw. When I first found out in Art class that I had won I couldn't believe it!"



CHOIR PERFORMS THE NATIVITY AT ST GILES CARE HOME

Year 10 student Caitlin Wesson, said, "I enjoy singing because it always puts a smile on people's faces. It is lovely to be able to sing at St Giles Care Home and bring a bit of festive cheer to the residents."





CHRISTMAS FAYRE

Santa's grotto, Christmas donkeys, and carols sung by the choir, kicked off the festive season for visitors to Grace Academy's Christmas Fayre. Among the festive treats on offer were hand-made chocolates, hot chocolate and cakes, a host of seasonal stall holders and Christmas crafts including tree decorations, candles, face painting and glitter tattoos. Money raised at the Fayre will be donated towards Marie Curie Cancer Care. Laura Wadley, Youth and Community Coordinator, said, "It was a lovely family occasion for the whole community, with lots of festive fun in the run up to Christmas."

OUTSTANDING PERFORMANCE OF THE NATIVITY

Over 70 guests attended The Nativity performance of traditional carols in four-part harmony and gospel songs with a festive twist. Adam Hepkin, Artistic Educational Developer, said, "It's the hardest working group of students we've had so far and the experiences they have had this year have really contributed to the professionalism of their performance."

Year 10 student Sophie Gibb said, "It has been a fantastic experience and we have taken time to learn new songs and build great relationships with other people to perform the songs to an outstanding standard." Community choir singer Margaret Doughty added, "Thank you from all of us for giving us a fantastic opportunity, and one that has opened many doors for us in the performing world of music. We are all truly grateful."



MAKING THE COUNTY TEAM

Lauren Croot is celebrating making the West Midlands Metropolitan County School team after competing in trials against over 30 other girls from Year 9 in the West Midlands area. Only 16 girls made it into the final team and Lauren said, "Getting into the county team is, in my eyes, a big achievement for me and I am really excited for my future ahead."



A BIT OF SPARKLE!

A BIG THANK YOU to Driscoll Electrical Contractors and AirTech Optimise for sponsoring our outdoor Christmas tree this year, and adding a bit of sparkle to the festivities!

