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Leader in Me Morningside students give back with Beanie Babies project

ANDREW HARP The News-Enterprise

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Winnie Matthews, a fourth-grade student at Morningside Elementary School in Elizabethtown, reads the note she wrote about her Beanie Baby, Confetti, to the Leader in Me group during lunch on Wednesday. The group is renaming Beanie Babies and writing notes for children in therapy.

ANDREW HARP/The News-Enterprise

From left, Western Kentucky University student Elaney Logsdon and Morningside Elementary School students and-fifth-graders get Beanie Babies.

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Students at the Leader in Me organization at Morningside Elementary School in Elizabethtown are giving back to children in need.

Laurie Parker, volunteer adviser of the group, said the fourth- and fifth-graders work on various service projects throughout the year.

A few years ago, she procured a box of Beanie Babies from a friend when she moved to Chicago. This school year, in trying to think of a new service project with the students, Parker said she realized her Beanie Babies could be of use.

“I decided that we would take the Beanie Babies, cut their tags off and rename them,” Parker said. “Give them a new life.”

Parker said she has friends who work and have offices for child and family therapy.

She said once the Beanie Babies have been renamed, the Leader in Me students will write notes to accompany the stuffed animals to give context.

The toys will be given to those kids who are going through therapy.

“Kind of a little buddy for them to go with,” Parker said.

The names and notes usually play off with the appearance of the animal.

“It’s been a really fun experience watching these kids come up with the names,” Parker said.

Leader in Me is a school improvement model that empowers students with leadership and life skills.

“I want them to be great leaders and I want them to think about their future,” Parker said.

Winnie Matthews, a fourth-grader at Morningside, named a colorful Beanie Baby Confetti, and wrote a note to accompany it which includes, “I’m a bear that will light your path.”

“I really liked just thinking about writing something nice to somebody else that just needs a kind note,” Matthews said.

She said so far, 60 Beanie Babies have been renamed and are ready to be given to therapists.

Western Kentucky University students were at the school Wednesday to let students know they would be helping in the Beanie Baby endeavors.

Cheyenne Rayls, an early education student at WKU, is one of five students working on the service project required for one of their social studies classes.

“We decided that would be a great way to reach out to the community,” Rayls said.

She said they have reached out to various people on social media and classes asking for donations of small stuffed animals or Beanie Babies. The end goal is about 300 stuffed animal donations.

Rayls said the plan is to continue this project soon after the assignment for school is complete.

“We really believe in this project as a group,” she said. “It’s a really great thing for the students to be involved in.”

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