



Photo by Satsun Photography

Dear Stokes School Community,

The end of year holiday season is often a time of reflection, an opportunity to express gratitude, and for many, a time for selfless acts of giving. As a community of educators, and members of the Stokes School community in particular, we work to impart these values upon our scholars not only during the holiday season but also throughout the year. We want our scholars to understand that giving, caring and showing concern for others is beneficial not only for the recipient but also for the giver. This is one of the ideas that form the foundation of Stokes Schools' Three School Rules: I will take care of myself; I will take care of others; and I will take care of my community.

But if the holidays are a time set aside for giving, let's challenge ourselves to give for the sake of giving and not because we expect anything in return. We don't have to volunteer every day of our winter break or donate a month's salary to charity in order to give back to our community. The smallest acts of giving will go a long way toward improving the lives of others. Below are a few ideas about selfless acts of giving that any of us can perform this holiday season.

Volunteer: Volunteer at a homeless shelter, food pantry or pet shelter. Volunteering is a selfless act that brings satisfaction to the volunteer, makes a difference to the community and brings a sense of joy to everyone involved.

Donate: Donate clothes to an individual, toys to needy families or money to a worthy organization. This can bring an incredible sense of satisfaction.

Cook a meal for others: Treat a family to a home-cooked meal. For the past month, I have personally benefited from the extreme generosity of Stokes School staff members who, each day, have prepared meals for me and my family during my recovery from hip replacement surgery. Not only has the food been delicious, but it has been one of the greatest acts of generosity that I have ever experienced.

Pay it forward: Make someone's day by paying for their order at a coffee shop, a restaurant or at the grocery store. They will be overwhelmed by your thoughtful gesture.

Help for free: Help a neighbor shovel snow or assist an elderly person with his or her shopping bags. These simple acts of kindness go a long way and will be greatly appreciated.

Participate in a food drive: Donate canned goods, produce or gift certificates. Food drives are a great way to help feed families in need. Food banks need donations as well as volunteers to help organize and deliver food to families.

Tell someone how much you appreciate them: This holiday season, take time to tell the people who mean the most to you how much you appreciate them. A favorite parting phrase of one member of our Stokes School community is "I appreciate you." Hearing these three words will warm the recipient's heart.

Thanks to all of you for the kindness and generosity that you bring to the Stokes School community. Have a wonderful winter break and holiday season and we look forward to seeing you in the new year.

Sincerely

Erika Bryant
Executive Director