

THE SEASON OF GIVING

Before students headed home for the winter break, we gathered to share in Christmas festivities and a night of giving back! Partnering with Soldier On Service Dogs, our students put together baskets of goodies to be presented to veterans and their families at an end of year banquet the nonprofit hosts.

Soldier On Service Dogs is a local organization that pairs veterans with service dogs. Twenty percent of Iraq and Afghanistan war veterans have Post Traumatic Stress Disorder and/or Traumatic Brain Injury. Estimates for Northwest Arkansas put the number of PTSD/TBI veterans at about 14,000. These incredible service dogs do amazing things for veterans including detecting seizures, disrupting nightmares, calling 911, reducing the need for medication, mitigating anxiety, and reducing stress.

Our students were excited to give back to these local veterans and show our appreciation for their service. Sporting festive Christmas sweaters and singing along to Christmas carols, Wesley students split into stations across the Nita Lindsey Great Room to help make, decorate, and bag special treats. Each basket was filled with cookies decorated by the students, homemade hot chocolate mix, homemade chex mix, holiday flavored dog treats, and cards signed by students. "I loved bonding with the people at Wesley who all came together for this common cause," shared senior Betsy Hein. "The spirit our Wesley community showed by putting so much care into creating and packaging the baskets for these veterans was so uplifting."

Watching the students work together and enjoy making gifts for others truly showcased the Spirit's presence in the room. Though college students might not have much, they pour their hearts into giving where they can. Since so many students are not native to the Northwest Arkansas area, we are always excited to provide opportunities for students to get involved in the local community. We continue to challenge students to reach beyond themselves and serve others.

To learn more about Soldier On Service Dogs, visit soldieronservicedogs.org.

