

An important piece of family, school, and community partnering is empowering families to help support their children's basic needs. At Pleasant View Elementary, this is accomplished through The Miracle Shop, a gift shop that provides holiday gifts and toys for families in need. By creating an opportunity for families to choose which toys and gifts to purchase for their children for a suggested donation of 50 cents to \$2, families are empowered to donate at their financial comfort level.

Pleasant View Elementary sought to change the dynamics of the traditional charity model of a community member buying a suggested toy for an anonymous girl or boy. By instead having a 'suggested donation' priced gift shop, a family is able to choose gifts for their own children, which in turn raises the family's level of dignity, particularly for parents who struggle with the idea of not being able to provide for their children. Pleasant View Elementary's Family Engagement Liaison, principal, families, and community partners collaborated on how to do things differently, and The Miracle Shop was born using school space.

Donated toys and gifts are still collected from community members, with lists of popular toys and gifts being sent to participating organizations. As families choose gifts, they slip their donation into a box. This process ensures that no one else can see how much an individual is donating. The Miracle Shop is run by family volunteers who are paid in 'Miracle Bucks' at \$9 an hour (individuals are limited to two paid hours). The 'Miracle Bucks' can then be used to purchase items in the shop, further offsetting the cost a family would otherwise use. Individuals who run the shop build their customer service and organization skills as they organize and restock toys. By having family volunteers as shop associates, a sense of community is created.

For families in emergency situations, a 'promise grant' (a one-time only request of no more than \$100) of collected donations is available. Requests are made through the school and the Family Engagement Liaison. Each request is reviewed and approved by a committee of Rotary members. This process then becomes an opportunity to have deeper conversations on what other resources the family is in need of and has access to.

Each year, The Miracle Shop is assessed in focus meetings to determine how to make it better. One outcome of these meetings was the addition of the 'Miracle Bucks' for shop associates. When implementing a practice such as The Miracle Shop, Pleasant View Elementary staff recommend talking to community partners and families about the value of switching from the traditional holiday charity gift giving to a new tradition that empowers families and encourages their participation.

Families know their children best, and being able to choose the perfect toy or gift for them engages families and helps them feel like part of the process during the holidays. Students then benefit from having involved parents.