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For Immediate Release

Lions Club Leads Holiday Luncheon at SBP

STEUBENVILLE-Staff and special needs students at the School of Bright Promise were treated to a meal and visit from Santa Claus during the Steubenville Lions Club's annual holiday luncheon on Dec. 6.

Members of the Lions Club and Harding Middle School Leo Club served up a delicious meal of roast beef, potatoes and other goodies to more than 140 people while teacher Amanda Baker provided green and red cupcakes to enjoy. Each class then got to spend time with Santa and friends in the gym, where presents were handed out to the excited youngsters. Also on hand was the Lions Club mascot, who greeted students with high fives and hugs.

Lions Club member Tim Walters said it has been a popular event and he enjoyed being involved.

"I love it. I've done it for over 10 years," he added. "To see the children's faces when Santa comes in, it's priceless."

He continued that it was great to see the Leo Club also get involved, as well. The school organization currently yields 70 members and Jennifer Blackburn, Success for All facilitator who led the group of six eighth-graders for the day, agreed that it taught the teens about giving back.

"It's such a great change for the kids to give back to the community and to get involved in a great way," Blackburn added. "They understand service to the community."

Leo members included Olivia Reese, Isabella Yetts, Anthony Shevlin, Chloe Petrelle, Libby Saccoccia and Julianna King, and a few of them mentioned how much they liked participating.

"I really like helping," said Reese. "I feel so good when I help others."

"It's making me feel like a better person," added Yetts. "It's fun to get to help out."

Even some School of Bright Promise students chimed in about what they liked most.

"I like Christmas," exclaimed Cheyenne Hooper.

"I'm ready for Christmas day," added Logan Briggs.

Mike Zinno, superintendent of the Jefferson County Board of Developmental Disabilities and former Lions Club president, said the civic organization used proceeds from a recent Ohio State-Michigan tailgate party fundraiser to purchase the presents and the luncheon has become an annual tradition. It began more than three decades ago when then club members Joe DiCarlo and Rick Pfannenschmidt, who also was the county MRDD superintendent, decided to host an event. DiCarlo donned Santa's red suit for 28 years but the luncheon has continued even longer.

Zinno was also pleased with the participation of the Leo Club and hopes it spurs more civic involvement in their future.

"I thought it was great," he said. "I think having the Harding Leos here really added a great element and I'm really appreciative to those young kids for giving back to those in need."