

SUN PHOTO BY CICELY BABB

A Holston Home student receives a surprise gift from Santa Claus, portrayed by Holston Home staff member Kyler Johnson, Thursday afternoon.

Holston Home Students Receive Surprise From Santa

BY CICELY BABB
STAFF WRITER

After their graduation ceremony on Thursday, Holston United Methodist Home for Children received a surprise visit from Santa Claus, who flew in on a helicopter to deliver a special Christmas gift.

The surprise was orchestrated by Inside Track WOW Foundation partners Alan Bracken, who piloted the helicopter, and Fred Pinney.

Inside Track WOW is a leadership development training company that focuses on outdoor challenges and appreciation events, and the related foundation is a nonprofit organization.

Pinney and Bracken are also members of the Tri-Cities Boating Club, which typically takes the Holston Home children to Boone Lake in the summer for a day on the water.

"We couldn't do that this year because of COVID, so we wanted to do something," Pinney said.

"I would say this qualifies as something," Holston Home President Bradley Williams said to Pinney and Bracken. "So many things this year that have been different, have been hard, but you guys brought something different today that was good."

Bracken said he and Pinney had discussed the idea of doing a "Santa drop" to surprise children prior to the pandemic and decided to go for it this year, as the nature of the outdoors visit suited the COVID-19 safety restrictions.

"I said we just need to do it this year," Bracken said.

Santa, played for the visit by Holston Home staff member Kyler Johnson, gave each of the 60 students who live at Holston Home a $100 Walmart gift card.

Pinney said the Inside Track WOW Foundation raised money for the gift cards and thanked the businesses, individuals and organizations, including the boating club, who contributed. After their stop at Holston Home, the pair flew on to Rise Up! in Johnson City to give 65 more children gift cards.

"How blessed we are to live in this community," Williams

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SUN PHOTO BY CICELY BABB

A Holston Home student approaches Santa as other students and staff look on from the steps of the Christian Life Center on campus.



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Kyler Johnson, as Santa, and Holston Home's Vice President of Program Services Gayle Mrock distribute Walmart gift cards to the students who live at Holston United Methodist Home for Children.

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said. "In a time where things are hard and people are struggling in different ways, the love, generosity and care has been so sweet and overwhelming."

Williams added that the children who call Holston Home their home are well deserving.

"The kids have been incredible," Williams said. "It's challenging for them to leave their families under normal circumstances. To do it this year, they have been so resilient, kept a great attitude and outlook, and been involved in reaching out to community members who are struggling."

For more information about Holston Home, visit www.holstonhome.org.