

Student Reporter

“Toys for Tots” Toy Drives Help Spread the Holiday Spirit



Jonathan Kim
Grade 10
Culver City High School



Volunteers help children choose from a selection of toys for the “Toys for Tots” toy drives.
[Source: Author, Jonathan Kim]

During the holiday season, the Salvation Army holds annual toy drives across America, cooperating with the U.S. Marine Corps Reserve’s “Toys for Tots” program. Initially starting out as a charitable effort in Los Angeles in 1947, “Toys for Tots” soon grew into a national campaign, thanks to Major William L. Hendricks and the help of his wife and other Marine re-

servists. Since then, “Toys for Tots” has ensured that food, toys, and other supplies can be distributed to underserved families and children during the holidays.

In recent weeks, “Toys for Tots” has continued to share this holiday spirit. The Salvation Army store on 947 Hoover St in Los Angeles has been just one example across the

country of the popularity of the influence of this project. Before the events took place, toys and other donated supplies were collected at the store. Prior to 1980, used toys would be collected and refurbished by reservists before being distributed to families; now only new, unwrapped toys already in standard condition have been qualified to donate for the nationwide “Toys for Tots” program. This qualification obviously also pertains to packaged foods and other items.

On December 18th, numerous Boy Scout troops and other local youth groups volunteered in running the events held at the Salvation Army store. Registered families for the toy drives arrived at the specific time slots that they had previously signed up for — this system was implemented to avoid overcrowding and maintain a certain level of social distancing. Toys were separated at the store based on age and gender. After signing in, each family was guided by one of the volunteers called a “shopper,” who helped them

select 1-2 toys for each child. In addition to receiving toys, families also received children’s clothing, a box of food and other COVID-19-related supplies, and a gift card.

While some volunteers served as “shoppers,” others were responsible for carrying these items to the families’ respective vehicles and spreading the holiday cheer while Christmas music played throughout the day. Through the work of these volunteers, the toy drive events were run smoothly during the day to ensure that these underserved families could enjoy the holiday and Christmas season, just as anyone else.

Especially with the rise of the Omicron variant having aggravated the current state of the pandemic, the economic burden for many people has only worsened in recent times. Toy drives like these are important by not only physically providing for underserved families, but also creating a feeling of holiday spirit and compassion.

Student Reporter

Why Is the Season Jolly?



Andrew Chung
Grade 10
Los Osos High School

Christmas is a holiday that is celebrated throughout the globe. Currently, it’s the season of giving and receiving, spending time with loved ones, a time where everyone’s cultural differences come together. This special day, December 25th, is one that the world looks forward to yearly, and although the festivity is always high-spirited, many people don’t know why Christmas exists. The jolly holiday has a lot of traditional background into it, and one might be surprised by how it originated.

Before a man named Jesus was born, there were many celebrations during the time of winter. These celebrations were held after the coldest and darkest days of winter were over, which represented the anticipation of hot and sunny days that were coming. In fact, cattle were slaughtered, meaning that the feeding season was over too. Fresh meat was actually attainable during this time of



Christmas-themed decorations have been a huge part of the holiday culture, as several houses are enhanced with lights and bright colors.
[Source: Ellen Song]

the year, which was then used as special meals that were part of the celebration. Besides this, there are many other backgrounds of how Christmas actually began. This includes the event of Saturnalia, a holiday that celebrated Saturn, who was the god of agriculture. Due to this holiday, during that time there were many lenient exceptions that occurred, such as enslaved people given a month’s worth of freedom and the clos-

ing of schools. Another belief as to why Christmas is celebrated is that the 25th is Jesus’s birthdate. Although the actual bible itself does not mention a specific date, Pope Julius I chose December 25th as Jesus’s special day, keeping the tradition of celebrating during the winter solstice. Some even say that he had chosen this date to acquire the cultural aspects of Saturnalia.

One of the most popular ele-

ments of Christmas that is known worldwide would be the famous Santa Claus. Otherwise known as St. Nicholas, in the third century, he had given away all of his wealth while traveling across the world. He had provided for many, especially the children, and it wasn’t until the 18th century when he had become a part of the American Christmas culture as well. Eventually there were many developments to Santa Claus from America. This included the classic red costume or the sleighs and reindeers that Santa uses to travel when delivering presents. There have been so many different cultural additions to this holiday, such as the tradition of leaving cookies and milk for Santa. All countries around the world have a Christmas that may be distinct from others, but that’s what makes the season jolly. To this day, Santa Claus is enormously popular amongst all children, and everyone hopes to have their wishes granted by their truly.

Student Reporter

The Enneagram of Personality



Sae-Eun Lee
Grade 12
Northview High School

It is natural for people to wonder what their personalities are like and how it influences their lives. In fact, understanding one’s own personality traits and those of people one interacts with can be important in maintaining healthy relationships. Among the most well-known personality descriptions are Zodiac signs and the Myers Briggs Type Indicator, but another interesting personality description is the Enneagram.

The Enneagram personality test can be easily taken online for free. Depending on the test, the main Enneagram personality number, instinctual subtype, and wing can be determined. These tests can answer useful questions that explore people’s motivations, fears, and how they think and feel.

There are nine different personalities characterized by one through nine. The first is called the Reformer, who is described by having a rational, idealistic image that strives to be a perfectionist, prin-

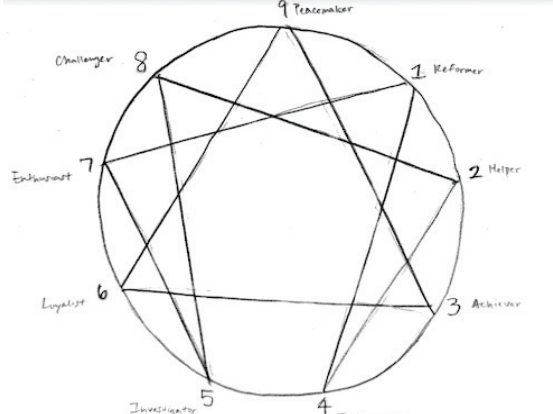
cipled, and self-controlled. They have strong ethics, are driven by justice, and desire to be free of corruption. The second is the Helper, the most caring, generous, and people-pleasing type. The third is the Achiever, who is mainly known for being success-oriented and image-conscious. They are ambitious, hard-working, and fear being worthless. The fourth personality is called the Individualist, which is associated with expressive and temperamental traits. The fifth one is the Investigator, who is the innovative, reserved, and an analytical kind of person. These types strive to prove themselves competent and capable. Sixth is the Loyalist, a responsible and committed person, and the seventh is the Enthusiast, a fun-loving and versatile type. The eighth is called the Challenger, who is dominating, self-confident, and a leader. Lastly, the ninth is the Peacemaker, who is the easygoing and agreeable kind of person. These types maintain inner peace, harmony, and try to avoid conflict. The rarest personality is the Indi-

vidualist and the most common one is the Peacemaker.

Some notable figures of the Enneagram can also be studied. For example, Bill Gates and Albert Einstein are investigators, Gandhi is a reformer, Abraham Lincoln and Barack Obama are peacemakers, and Mother Theresa and Eleanor Roosevelt are helpers.

Knowing one’s own personality can not only be interesting but also

helpful in the real world. Enneagram provides useful information, such as the different types’ thinking patterns, underlying motivations, strengths, and weaknesses. Therefore, knowing different personalities can enhance people’s comprehension of each other and help them work through their differences with an open mind. This can also be beneficial for self-evaluation, managing conflicts, and understanding what people can work on to live a happier lifestyle.



The Enneagram of personality is characterized by a chart of the nine different personalities and how they interconnect.
[Source: Author, Sae-Eun Lee]

Student Reporter

How to Enjoy Winter Break



Jiwoo Kim
Grade 12
Northwood High School



A Christmas decoration made at home with the family is a great memento of time spent together during Winter Break.
[Source: Author, Jiwoo Kim]

After stressful finals week, there is a sweet winter break waiting for students. Just as how the winter looks different across the country, many students have different

plans to make their winter break the best. If you have no idea about holiday plans, here are some good ways to spend a great holiday break.

A lot of students spend time with their loved ones during Winter Break, and the ways that they spend time together vary. Some prepare special presents for people, such as selecting a secret Santa for each other. It is a good opportunity to give a gift that the person specifically needs or has been waiting to get for a long time. However, the most important thing is to share that we care for each other, regardless of how small or big the present is.

Since it is a special time of the year, you can also have a great din-

ner with the people around you. Having time for joyful conversations while eating would be a warm way to spend the cold winter. A family trip is another good way to try out new activities that you could not do by yourself. The view of the new beach, forest, or mountain will look better with the people you love.

In contrast, students also spend more time on themselves during Winter Break. Since they are not in school, there is a lot of time in a day that can be used for special things. One thing they can do is to sleep longer to refresh their energy that had been exhausted during finals week. There is a list of TV series that some keep to binge-watch after school and studies are over. In a cozy bed with a little snack, students can have a comforting time

enjoying these shows. The movie “Home Alone” is highly recommended by students at Northwood High, as a classical entertaining movie.

Another thing students can do is buy themselves some gifts. Buying small things for oneself will feel like getting a special award for the work that they have been doing for the first semester of school and recharging for the next year.

If you don’t have your own holiday tradition for this time of year, trying one of these ideas may help your vacation be more enjoyable. I hope you all have a great winter break in a way that pleases you the most. The important thing to remember is to always stay safe and healthy. Have a wonderful holiday!

Student Reporter

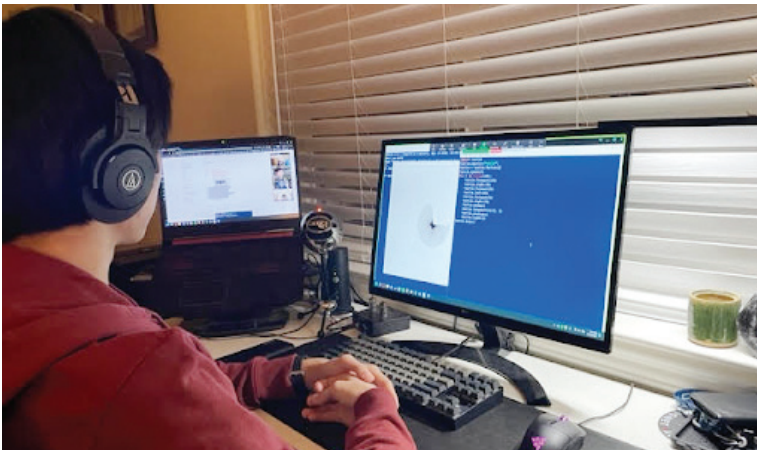
Teaching Coding to the Kids



Noah Moon
Grade 10
Granada Hills Charter High School

Coding is an important skill in the 21st century, as technology is becoming more and more prevalent in our lives. As we become more enveloped in this new world, certain skills are necessary to use and innovate. I teach 4th and 5th graders these certain skills to give them a foundation of knowledge to become the next generation of innovators. I teach them through CodeBuddy, a non-profit organization where high school students with a computer science background can teach elementary school students. They can be found at <https://www.codebuddy-ca.org>. Not only does coding give a modern skillset, it also encourages critical and logical thinking through solving problems with code or solving problems in the code itself.

A typical schedule for this class consists of 4 main parts. The first is the intro containing demonstration and explanation, such as telling students to look out for a certain part that would be in the code. The second part is the actual programming, where I type out



Coding is a great way to spend time, and teaching coding to elementary school students has brought me great joy.
[Source: Author, Noah Moon]

the code, explain what the code does, and answer questions. The third part is looking for bugs, or errors, and fixing them. I include intentional errors so that students learn how certain functions or commands should be used. The last part is giving students time to play with the project they made and also make their own changes to it, showing an understanding of the code being used.

I use Scratch and Python, the former a basic block programming language that is heavily di-

rected towards elementary and middle school students, and the latter being a higher-level coding language used for actual web and app development. Due to both Scratch’s and Python’s accessibility and powerful application, they are perfect for teaching. For the 4th graders, I teach them mainly Scratch, as it makes it much easier to code and understand. You can make a huge range of projects and programs with Scratch, but I mostly cover making games, as it requires both good knowledge of how the code works as well as

keeping the students interested.

Python is a higher level programming language that is used in real-world applications for both web development and computer application. I teach this to 5th graders that have already done Scratch, as they have a basic understanding of how programming works. I mostly use simple word games and animations, as creating a more graphical program is much harder. Through these projects, I teach the kids basic programming functions such as lists or loops and how to implement them into the code.

Doing Codebuddy and teaching elementary-school students to code is both fulfilling and fun. Teaching and inspiring a younger generation of coders who may go on to change the world is very rewarding, and it looks good on ones college transcript. There is a certain joy in teaching others and spreading knowledge. If you have a computer science background and are interested, go ahead and join!

Student Reporter

Spending Non-(Existent) Money?



Joyce Choi
Grade 12
John Marshall High School

Recently on social media there have been posts of people examining their spending habits, especially during the holiday season. The posts revolve around the logic of the person saying that certain forms of currency—whether it be cash, venmo, or card—aren’t thought of as actually spending money. Of course, the people stating this KNOW they are spending, but some of these forms of currency seem “unlimited,” so they don’t count it. Now, it is obvious that these people didn’t post their videos to be psycho-analyzed, but many people can relate, evident in the comments of the said videos. So can I. I recently went abroad and found myself easily spending over \$60 almost everyday, whereas back home, I agonized over \$5 potential purchases. It was as if my brain didn’t register the foreign money in my

hands as actual money, and that I was ruthlessly spending it.

Was it denial? Was it the new environment? Was it the fact that it was different from my usual method of payment? So many factors were possible. An anonymous source told me that due to her frequent online shopping, her brain has come to not consider using her card as actually spending money. On the flip side, this person rarely allows herself to spend when all she has is cash in hand. Another interviewee was quite the opposite. They spent cash freely but wouldn’t dare to touch their card. They explained that it was scarier to see the numbers in her account go down because in some way those numbers would always be there, while cash, if spent, was all gone, so they didn’t



Everyone’s spending habits are different and personal
[Source: Author, Joyce Choi]

have to look at it. It’s interesting to think that people have a sort of free pass when it comes to specific types of money. The two interviews did have one thing in common: they were more willing to spend money that they wouldn’t see as often. It loosely follows the same mindset of “out of sight, out of mind”.

Although people work hard for their money, they can sometimes be careless about it. Rightfully so, it is their money. Much like the ways in which people’s lifestyles, personalities, and careers can be particular, so are spending habits. Overall, this just shows how different yet similar everyone can be.