

Turkey time at Tiogue

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COVENTRY — Students, families, faculty and staff at Tiogue Elementary are bringing some holiday cheer to local families this week with their donation of 25 Thanksgiving baskets for members of the school community. Tiogue's annual Thanksgiving Food Drive is a beloved tradition that dates back more than 20 years, according to school staff.

Between their Thanksgiving Food Drive and a "Pink Out" event in October to benefit the Coventry Food Bank on MacArthur Boulevard,

students and staff collected more than 2,100 canned goods this year. Teachers and faculty personally donated 28 turkeys and each classroom was assigned an item to bring in to fill the baskets. The families to receive the baskets were selected from among the school community by lottery.

"One class had instant potatoes, another had stuffing and one had green beans," said Tara D'Aleno, a fourth grade ELA teacher at Tiogue. "So every basket has one of everything and 25 families will have a full turkey dinner."

Volunteers Abigail and Elizabeth Kaye offered

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Volunteers Elizabeth and Abigail Kaye smile for a photo while gathering goods for the Thanksgiving baskets on Monday morning.

Photo by Kendra Lolio



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their time to help coordinate the baskets and distribute them to families on Monday afternoon. The sisters were shuffling through the school hallways this week sorting the canned goods, organizing the turkeys and checking off items on their lists.

"We're just helping to bring people in and get them their food and then carry it to their cars," said Elizabeth. "It's great and I think people really appreciate it."

"It's nice to be able to help others," said Abigail.

According to D'Aleno, the Tiogue Thanksgiving Food Drive is a tradition more than 20 years in the making, starting with another faculty member years ago who has since retired. D'Aleno then signed on to take the reigns and carry on the tradition.

"What's so great about it is the whole school gets involved to give back to the community," she said. "The kids learn that being thankful could be as

simple as one canned good - that you can make a difference with one item. One can of peas can make all the difference."

"It's such a great way to show them that you can do one small thing and make an impact on a lot of people," she added.

This will be the first local food drive for Tiogue Elementary Principal Domenic Giusti, who is in his first year overseeing the school. He said he is proud of the efforts and the school's overall "spirit of volunteerism."

"It is such a giving community," Giusti said. "Our faculty and staff dedicate themselves to families in so many ways. When we asked for donations they were bringing items into school on day one. It is a pleasure to work with consummate professionals who truly embody the word 'selfless.' Our parent volunteers and families that donated are absolutely amazing."

The effort is part of the school's work as a Feinstein Leadership School.

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