

Grigsby Holiday Express Goal Is Same: 'To Meet The Holiday Needs'

by Chris Mitchell

December 9 2020 5:08 PM



GRANITE CITY - Grigsby social worker Shelby Myatt admits the Grigsby Holiday Express will be much different in 2020, but the goal remains the same - "To meet the holiday needs."

Myatt, who is in her 21st year working in the Granite City Community Unit School District #9, did not grow up in Granite City, but her five children are. And this is a way for her family to give back to her community.

"Giving back to a community that has given back so much to me is really important," said Myatt. "It's nice to do something for people in this community. We try really hard to have all of our kids come back from Christmas break and share how much fun they had."

Prior to COVID-19, the entire process took around 10 weeks from start to finish.

Beginning in October, Myatt and her fellow GCSD9 social workers collect names of families that are in need, and then begin the process of buying the gifts.

Guardians are invited to the cafeteria to have a warm home-cooked meal and to shop in the "store" for gifts. Guardians then wrap the gifts and write a thank you note to a sponsor.

Each family is provided a shopper, which assists in the serving of the food and the shopping and wrapping of gifts. Volunteers include teachers, bankers, church volunteers and firefighters from the GC community.

"It's neat for our volunteers to interact with the guardians and to realize they have a story too." Myatt added. "The community comes together to rally behind our families that need it."

This year's event is virtual and volunteers have been delivering gifts to families throughout the month of December.

Last year the Grigsby Holiday Express serviced 55 students, and this year Myatt continues to fill needs on a much smaller scale due to COVID-19.

Holiday Express referred 20 families to Billie's Kids Christmas in 2020. Other groups who have helped Grigsby students and their siblings out with gifts, specifically as part of Holiday Express include: Candi Parker and sisters, Blue Refuge, Remax, Kraft, Karen Tilishalski, Church Women United, and Grigsby teachers and their families.

"We could not put together this event without help from our local businesses and community members. We are very thankful for their support," said Myatt. "All of the GCSD9 social workers take care of holiday needs in their perspective buildings and have been doing so for a very long time. I just created Holiday Express as a means for parents and community members to work together for the benefit of children."