

Shawnee students create capes for kids at Children's Hospital

By Thomas Franz 



Shawnee Elementary School fifth-graders in Lisa LoMedico's class hold up their capes, which they will give to Children's Hospital of Michigan this holiday season. (Photo provided by Lisa LoMedico)

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MACOMB TOWNSHIP — Fifth-grade students from Shawnee Elementary School are being transformed into superheroes this year, and their next mission is giving their capes to ill children at Children's Hospital of Michigan this Christmas.

Inspired by the book "What's Under Your Cape?" fifth-grade teachers Lisa LoMedico and Katie Couture set out to create a unique curriculum for their students this year.

In doing so, their classes will accomplish a task or project that begins with each letter in the word superhero, with "S" standing for service.

To fulfill their service goal, the teachers' 66 students have created superhero capes, which they are giving to Children's Hospital for the Christmas season.

"We talked about where the capes would be going and the kids in the hospital, how they might not be having a good Christmas or a good time, so this would help brighten their day," Couture said. "The kids are really excited, I think all of the kids participate in bringing money in; they were supposed to do service in their house to earn \$5 in order to cover all of the supplies for the cape."

The classes have already fulfilled goals for "U," which stands for unconditional love, and "P" for perseverance.

“Instead of just teaching the curriculum, we’re trying to teach them how to be good citizens and have the qualities of being a superhero to become leaders,” Couture said.

Couture said the service project is especially significant to her because of her first-grade son, who she said has made more than 10 visits to Children’s Hospital to treat hydrocephalus, a condition he was diagnosed with when he was 6 months old. He also battled a bout of bacterial meningitis just a week after being born.

“Anytime I can give back to them, I try to do so, since it’s something he’ll probably be benefiting from when he’s in there in the future as well,” Couture said. “He loves going there. That’s the thing — when he has to go there, he never complains about going there.”

Hydrocephalus is the buildup of fluid on the brain, which causes swelling. Couture said her son has undergone 13 surgeries to treat the condition.

“He loves the nurses, the people, and the stuff they do to try to make the stay a little bit easier for them,” Couture said. “That’s the biggest thing for me — he’s not 100 percent upset about being there. That’s what’s important to me.”

As for the superhero capes, LoMedico and Couture said their students have designed their own emblems or have modeled them after famous characters like Superman or Mickey Mouse.

Paint and jewels were also used to personalize the capes.

Although the teachers are primarily coming up with ideas for each letter of superhero as the year goes along, they said “E” will represent empathy and “R” will represent respect.

In addition to the fifth-grade service project during the Christmas season, Shawnee’s student council sponsored a Thanksgiving food drive to benefit Hope Center in Macomb.

Each year, students collect food items and take a field trip to the Hope Center to stock the center’s shelves with the food they’re donating.

This year, the students collected 1,080 pounds of food and other items for the Hope Center.