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York County special needs children have Christmas their way - York Dispatch

yorkdispatch.com Updated Dec 18th, 2014

York County special needs children have Christmas their way

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505-5432/@ydhealth

POSTED: 12/14/2014 07:54:48 PM EST | UPDATED: 4 DAYS AGO

1 COMMENT



Peyton Guresh, 10 of Seven Valleys, touches the lights on a Christmas tree as special needs children and their families were treated to a Christmas Party at the Shrewsbury Volunteer Fire Company, thanks to donations from community members and businesses. December 3, 2014. John A. Pavoncello - jpavoncello@yorkdispatch.com

When special needs children are nonverbal, they speak in their own way.



A Chihuahua dressed in a mini Santa hat charmed Peyton Guresh, 10, during a Christmas party for special needs families on Sunday. As the KPETS service dog gently licked her nose, her face scrunched up into a smile.



And 11-year-old Aidan Snader — in his life-of-the-party way — made sure to run around as much as he could and give Santa lots of hugs.

For his mom, Danielle Snader of New Freedom, the party was a break from the uncomfortable stares and embarrassment that follow when Aidan acts up in public.

Santa gets a big hug from Aidan Snader, 11 of New Freedom, as special needs children and their families were treated to a Christmas Party at the Shrewsbury Volunteer Fire Company, thanks to donations from community members and businesses. December 3, 2014. John A. Pavoncello - jpavoncello@yorkdispatch.com

"You don't have to worry about it," she said. "It makes you feel good."



Cody Epperson, 5 of Fairfield, visits with Santa as special needs children and their families were treated to a Christmas Party at the Shrewsbury Volunteer Fire Company, thanks to donations from community members and businesses. December 3, 2014. John A. Pavoncello - jpavoncello@yorkdispatch.com

Donations: More than 50 people joined the party, which was organized by Tracie Guresh, Peyton's mom.

"It was the community, though," she said. "I just put the word out, and everybody came to me."

Guresh spread the word to her Facebook group, PA Parents of Children with Special Needs of York County. And when she asked for help on the Southern York County PA Facebook, an outpouring of donations followed, she said.

Nick Caruccio, president of Shrewsbury Volunteer Fire Co., donated the fire hall, which hosted the party, Guresh said. The York Revolution, Baltimore Orioles and Harrisburg Senators donated bobbleheads and

tickets to games for raffles, and several local businesses pitched in too, she said.

Happiness: Guresh said she doesn't have a diagnosis for Peyton, who is nonverbal and has a seizure disorder.

As she reflected on why she brought the families together for a day of food, surprises and presents, her eyes welled up with tears.

"It makes me want to cry," Guresh said. "The joy on their faces, I just love it. I love to see how happy they are."

Snader said Aidan was diagnosed with Angelman syndrome when he was 11 months old. He has global developmental delays and seizures and is also considered autistic, she said.

The party was an exciting way for the kids to be their own special selves, she said.



"It's all for them," Snader said.

Support: Natalie and John Gilmore's daughter Lili, 13, has a severe form of epilepsy, and they've explored several treatment options. The Hanover-area family said that since February, Lili has undergone a clinical trial through New York University for Epidiolex, which is made from CBD, a component found in marijuana.

The drug doesn't appear to be a magic fix for Lili, but she enjoyed the party and had her best visit with Santa ever, Natalie Gilmore said.

"I thought it was fantastic. ... People are not staring at us and wondering what's wrong with her," she said.

Cassie Barrick's daughter Madison, 5, has Rett syndrome and isn't able to walk or talk, she said.

But the Fawn Grove resident said that Madison is happy, giggly and loved seeing Santa at the party.

"It's nice to have families all together. ... I don't think a lot of parents would get by without communication with other parents," Barrick said.

— *Reach Mollie Durkin at mdurkin@yorkdispatch.com.*



Peyton Guresh, 10 of Seven Valleys, visits with Santa as special needs children and their families were treated to a Christmas Party at the Shrewsbury Volunteer Fire Company, thanks to donations from community members and businesses. December 3, 2014. John A. Pavoncello - jpavoncello@yorkdispatch.com



Madison Barrick, 5 of Fawn Grove, right, visits with Finch the French Bulldog service dog from K-Pets Therapy Dogs as special needs children and their families were treated to a Christmas Party at the Shrewsbury Volunteer Fire Company, thanks to donations from community members and businesses. December 3, 2014. John A. Pavoncello - jpavoncello@yorkdispatch.com

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