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# Red Cross holiday party fulfills wishes of children

By LAURIE PELLICHERO  
Special to The Times

Six-year-old Jamie Recinos of Hightstown wasn't going to tell anyone what she had just asked Santa for this holiday season.

"It's something cute, but it's a secret," she said.

"I asked him for a baseball," said 7-year-old Marisol Randolph.

Jamie and Marisol were just two of 137 local children who were invited along with their families to attend the Red Cross Club Winter Holiday Party on Dec. 5 at Hightstown High School.

Each year, the Hightstown High Red Cross Club, with more than 300 members and 10 advisers, provides an evening of holiday joy for local families who don't have the means to make the holidays as bright as they'd like for their children.

"We started planning this back in August," said Brendan Pinhiero, Red Cross Club presi-

dent.

Planning included the coordination of a "giving tree," where club members pick off the name of one of the children to fulfill that child's holiday wish for a toy. Other party activities include face painting, balloon animals, a scavenger hunt, games and prizes, arts and crafts and pictures with Santa, who has been portrayed by Pinhiero for the past four years.

Club secretary Caroline McCarthy, who portrayed Mrs. Claus, said, "It's so great to see those little faces with Santa. They just light up."

Club adviser Jeanne Heikes sees the hard work the high school students put into making this and other events a success. "I think it's important that our youth learn to give back to the community, and the Red Cross Clubs provide so many opportunities for young adults to do just that."



The American Red Cross of New Jersey's Youth Services program integrates young people of all ages into the delivery of its services to the community through meaningful volunteer opportunities.

Through involvement with area Red Cross Clubs, local students develop leadership skills that will enable them to continue to be productive citizens as adults. The local chapter has 965 Red Cross Club members in high schools throughout its service area, with new clubs forming all the time.

The local chapter also provides programs for young people to learn about preparing for disasters and responding to emergencies, which helps them develop leadership skills, self-esteem and confidence.

Funds from this year's Times' Holiday Appeal will be used to support the services and  
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programs of the American Red Cross of Central New Jersey.

To make a donation in support of the American Red Cross of Central New Jersey, please make your check payable to The Times Holiday Appeal and mail or deliver it to: 500 Perry St., Box 847, Trenton NJ 08605. To make a donation online, visit [www.njredcross.org](http://www.njredcross.org).

All gifts will be acknowledged and anonymity, if requested, will be granted.

For more information about the Youth Services program, call the American Red Cross of Central New Jersey at (609) 951-8550.



Photo courtesy of American Red Cross of Central New Jersey

Hightstown High School Red Cross Club members bring a little holiday cheer to those less fortunate. From left, Mrs. Claus (club secretary Caroline McCarthy) and Santa (club president Brendan Pinhiero) give a gift to Jamie Recinos, 6, of Hightstown with the help of club member Monika Mackow.