



Linda Dow Hayes, Courier-Journal
 Participants in the confirmation classes at St. Christopher Church have spent much of the holiday season volunteering their time to assist the Volunteer's of America. Some of the services they provided were putting together food baskets, assisting families picking up their gifts and distributing items to shut-ins. At far left, the Gonzales family eagerly awaits their gift of a holiday turkey from volunteer John Zak. Above and at near left, students prepare food baskets for the needy.



Candy sale

Continued from Page 5

finisher Henry Johnson, a seventh-grader, did a "really great job" of selling \$1,021.

Andrew is also quick to credit his mother, Lori Thomas, who drove him from site to site, and who always carried candy to work so she could cater to the snacking whims of her fellow workers — as did Andrew's aunt and grandmother.

Family support is crucial, he pointed out, because competition can get pretty heated during the sale. "Some people got mad cause I was selling so much, and some tried to get vengeance on me, but some just said, 'Good for you,'" he said. "I got all kinds of responses."

Lori Thomas also made sure that her son kept his priorities straight. Despite his strenuous selling schedule, Andrew managed to maintain all A's and one B+ in class, play on the basketball team and practice the flute.

Nor was he allowed to succumb to temptation and "eat into" his profits. "I'm lucky if I get two candy bars the whole time," he said. "She's pretty serious about this."

So, if Andrew didn't get to keep the money or eat a lot of candy, why did he work so hard? Like the best of salesmen, he has a motive for selling that fits his every mood. On the one hand, he feels loyal to Corpus Christi. "I like the school and I want it to stay open," he explained. "This is a nice place to be compared to other schools I've been to."

Of course, there are other rewards for being top seller. This year, Andrew earned two books, 56 stickers, an AM/FM clock radio, a camera, headphones and \$50 in cash. He also gets to keep a lot of candy since, whenever a customer donates money without purchasing candy, the salesman may keep samples equal to the value of the donation.

Yet Andrew seems to have caught on early to the wisdom of countless fables — that material wealth only enriches us when we give it away. Except for the camera, he planned to use his earnings as Christmas gifts for family members and friends.

His plans suffered a setback when he had to use most of his cash prize to repair a framed picture he accidentally knocked off the wall at the Covenant Community Church where his family worships.

Andrew accepts his accident and the loss of his hard-earned cash philosophically. His attitude seems to indicate that not even prizes are at the heart of what moves him to try so hard.

An observer can only speculate, but perhaps what Andrew loves about the candy sale is the challenge of selling the most, the fun of setting records, the exhilaration of being the best. "I'm going for it every year," he said.

"It's fun. If you hustle a lot, you don't get really, really cold. If you don't hustle, people won't buy from you. You really have to put your all into it."

What those who know and love this tall, slender, bespectacled young man must know and newly appreciate each Christmas is that Andrew and his "all" are the most precious gift possible.

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