

Kids adopt Alabama learning center

Jennifer Burke/Contributing writer

As Catholic Schools Week Jan. 26-Feb. 1 turns the spotlight on Catholic education, many area schools are working on service projects to show their appreciation to the community of believers that helps support them. A group of students at St. Joseph's School in Auburn also are working on a service project, but for a different reason.

In the beginning of the school year, Pat Healy's third-grade class adopted the St. Joseph Learning Center in the rural logging community of Pine Apple, Ala. Rochester native Sister Nancy Clark, SSJ, runs the learning center, where approximately 30 children gather after school each day. The third-graders in Healy's class have helped the children of the learning center in a variety of ways so far this year.

"Every month we try to do a project of some type, and make some type of craft to send to the children. They had a bake sale in December and raised \$110," Healy said.

The money raised by the bake sale was used to buy new computer software for the learning center. Over the past few months, the students al-



Karin von Voigtlander/Catholic Courier

Eight-year-olds Marie Olszewski (left) and Amy Abraham, third-graders at St. Joseph School in Auburn, laugh Jan. 24 as they make Valentines for children in Pine Apple, Ala.



so have sent the center new educational puzzles and even some of their own slightly used books. On Jan. 24, the children made Valentine bears out of construction paper, filled them with candy and sent them to

Alabama.

Healy's desire to teach her students about giving and service to others sparked the idea for the project.

"I wanted to have an ongoing pro-

ject, and I wanted them to understand that there are a lot of people that have a lot less than we do. This just worked out perfectly," Healy said.

The students seem to be taking that lesson to heart.

"I feel great about doing the projects. They are fun, and I know that I'm helping someone learn with the projects I've made," said 9-year-old Emily Latanyshyn.

Her classmate, Christopher Wartos, also 9, expressed similar sentiments.

"I feel proud about sending toys and books to the learning center, because they live in a very rural community and have little toys and things," Christopher said.

Sister Clark often writes to the class, thanking the students for their generosity. Healy said the students enjoy this added element of interaction.

Healy is planning more projects for the remaining months of the school year. Another book drive is in the works, as is a baby shower at which children and parents will be asked to donate infant and baby clothes for the families of the children at the learning center.



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