A New Year, New Beginnings

by Cindy Kleyn-Kennedy

At Clovis Municipal Schools, we’re off to a running start in this New Year. Even though the holidays seemed to rush past this year, our schools offered a wealth of wonderful holiday programs and activities that delighted families and community members.

For example, Lockwood, our dual language elementary school, played to a packed house in their Christmas program; both the gym and cafeteria were opened up to accommodate the huge number of guests.

With dimmed lights the venue was decorated beautifully, including a pathway outlined with glowing “luminarias.” Once the audience was settled, students entered in a school procession of all grade levels, walking between the luminarias single-file as they sang “Silent Night” or “Noche de Paz” in Spanish. Lockwood’s Instructional Coach, Alyssa Runquist, provided program details: “Several of our 5th graders recited The Legend of the Poinsettias by Tomie DePaola, both in English and Spanish, with the book projected on a large screen during the reading. After the story, combined grade levels stood and sang a medley of Christmas Songs.” The program culminated movingly, with all students filing out, again singing Silent Night, this time in English.

At the other end of the spectrum, there was an outpouring of generous gestures and compassion by staff and students at all our school sites during the holiday season.

One great example was the Gattis Middle School Cheerleaders and Dance Team who combined efforts to do something different this holiday season. Gattis Cheer Coach, Courtni Jennings described their project: “Rather than having their own Christmas party, our Gattis cheerleaders and dancers decided to support a family in real need.” The girls got in touch with the Lighthouse Mission who connected them with a local family. Jennings continued, “Our girls decided to provide a large Christmas dinner, decorations, household items, along with plenty of Christmas gifts to open on Christmas day. These girls have such humble hearts and found much more joy in giving than receiving…and made every effort to make this the best Christmas ever, especially for the sweet little girls in this family.”

Gattis Dance Coach, Stephanie Mobley, who had partnered with Jennings in this project, went on to describe what a transforming experience it was for them all: “What an incredible blessing it was for both of us coaches and our girls. Most of the girls commented how this experience taught them the true meaning of Christmas. I even received a text from one of my dancers that read: ‘Thank you for giving us a great opportunity to do something nice. Thank you for teaching us this lesson about what we take for granted, and how we are blessed even if it may seem like we aren’t at some points in our lives. Out of everything you have taught us this year I think this will stay with us the longest...thank you, Coach!’ ”

It sounds like we had some great endings of last year to kick-start great new beginnings for this year.

Cindy Kleyn-Kennedy is the Instructional Technology Coordinator for the Clovis Municipal Schools and can be reached at cindy.kleyn-kennedy@clovis-schools.org