Senior High School chorus sang a variety of holiday songs for members of the Rotary Club during a recent meeting of the group at Alton’s Restaurant.

"Blizzard of caring' at West Middle East Middle School to host Mason Winfield

West Seneca East Middle School’s War of 1812 Club invites the community to attend an upcoming program that features Mason Winfield, author of “'Ghosts of 1812’” and several books on supernatural folklore in Western New York.

Winfield will talk about “'Ghosts of 1812’” at 7 p.m. Wednesday, Jan. 12, in the East Middle auditorium, 1415 Center Road in West Seneca. The club is asking for a $3 donation for admission.

The War of 1812 Club was founded two years ago by social studies teacher Scott Frank to cultivate the interest of students in local history, particularly the War of 1812, which took place nearby.

For more information on the speaker, visit his website, www.masonwinfield.com.

In other projects, students in the adolescent development classes sold homemade cake and dog treats to raise about $100 for the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals. They also accepted donations such as blankets and toys for the animals. Students also collected more than 100 winter clothing items for needy families through the Coats4Kids program.

Additionally, students volunteered with Hospice and Fourteen Holy Helpers Parish Giving Tree and pledged donations through the Christian Children’s Fund. One group of classmates even made a banner, signed by the entire student body, and care packages for children abroad through Godwin who was injured in a car accident earlier in the year. They personally delivered the items and spent time with Devin, even though they did not know him personally.

The school’s Wellness Committee got into the spirit of giving by setting up a toy drive at Elvan House, which services victims of domestic violence.

In a different type of initiative, SADD and Peer Counseling purchased a paper chain link to display in the school. Students are asked to make safe ideas over the holidays, such as “no texting while driving” and “no underage drinking.”

Spirit of giving alive and well at West Senior

Many local families and organizations in need will get a boost during the holidays, thanks to the generosity displayed at West Seneca West Senior.

The school participated in many service projects throughout the month of December, one of the largest of which was the canned food drive and “Sponsor a Family,” held in connection with the West Seneca Lions Club.

The local Lions, led by chairman Randi Gurney, coordinate the delivery of food, gifts, trees and winter outerwear to West Seneca families in need each Christmas.

At West Senior, the Student Council coordinated a canned food drive to aid the Lions’ efforts. Eight schools within the district participate in the food drive.

In addition to collecting canned goods, the Lions purchase perishable foods for a holiday meal for the needy families — the cost of which is approximately $25 per family.

Due to the economy, the Lions realized they could not afford to purchase as much perishable food last year. So Lions member and West teacher Joe Cantafio had the idea of asking the school’s homerooms and clubs to try to raise $25 each to contribute to the cause.

Cantafio extended the challenge to his classes again this year. “I explained where the money went and challenged them to clean out the cup holders and ash trays in their cars, clean out their purses and change cup on their dressers, and see how quickly the money adds up,” he said, emphasizing he did not offer any incentives such as extra credit for participation.

Cantafio’s five classes raised $608.89 — a great motivation for the rest of the school, which was asked to join in raising money a week after Cantafio’s classes began their efforts.

In total, the school raised $1,415 to purchase food for needy families. With help from participating West Seneca schools, the Lions were able to serve approximately 80 families this year.

“It was really quite impressive,” Cantafio said. It might be an understatement to say he was impressed with the students’ willingness to contribute. One student brought in a jug that she and her mother filled throughout the year. Cantafio called the student’s mother to let her know they didn’t have to donate the entire jug that she and her mother fill throughout the year. Cantafio called the student’s mother to let her know they didn’t have to donate the entire jug, which contained about $100. The mother said she was able to this year, and she knew the school and the Lions would help her family if they ever needed it.

In addition, West’s Key Club sponsored the Giving Tree to provide gifts to needy children in West Seneca. Also coordinated through the Lions’ holiday efforts, West was able to donate enough gifts for 107 children in 42 different families.

While these projects were significant, they were not the only charitable undertakings at West Senior this holiday season. Through the annual National Honor Society Santa on the Bridge fundraiser, the school was able to donate about $600 to a charitable organization that supports U.S. troops. Students pay to have their photos taken with Santa, and National Honor Society holds a holiday bake sale in connection to the activity.

Also, West’s String Ensemble and Bel Canto Singers traveled to Roswell Park Cancer Institute on Dec. 17 to perform for patients, their families and the staff.

Students at West Middle School are continuing their year of service learning with several projects aimed at helping families throughout West Seneca to have a happy holiday season.

Decorating Christmas trees and collecting canned goods are just some examples, but one project that the school was met with great enthusiasm was the “Teens for Teens Challenge.”

Students were asked to bring in an unwrapped gift for a teenager in need. The gifts will be delivered as part of a larger gift drive aimed at aiding families in the West Seneca community.

The rationale behind the project was that people often donate gifts for younger children but are not as likely to remember teenagers. In this project, which they were encouraged to hang on their lockers, creating a “blizzard of caring” in the halls of West Middle.