

## Kids learn to shop themselves

### Student Elf Shop provides lessons

By Kristen Hankla  
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Not many 6-year-olds do their own Christmas shopping. But when people open Ford Gasperson's gifts, they'll be getting something he picked out himself.

Winford and his classmates at Charles Towne Montessori had the opportunity to pick out and purchase small gifts at the school's annual Elf Shop, held three days this week. The event has been held for more than 20 years.

Karen Tang, a Charles Towne Montessori School parent, helps Parks Bevis label his gifts during the school's annual Elf Shop.

It's an appropriate event for a school that promotes independence, said Head of School Edward Jackson.

Students bring money from home, along with a list of people they need to shop for. When it's their turn to visit the Elf Shop, they receive assistance from volunteers — parents or older students — in selecting and wrapping gifts.

The items for sale are all donated by parents, and can be new or gently used. The money students bring in goes to a teacher appreciation fund.

In previous years, each item was assigned a price in an effort to teach budgeting.

Head Elf Carman Bevis, a parent volunteer, said she likes giving the students complete freedom in choosing gifts. "It's a lot of fun to see what they pick out."

This year that could mean potpourri for mom, a tape measure for dad and a jump rope for sis.

Bevis' 6-year-old son, Parks, was pleased with a deck of Winnie-the-Pooh cards he bought his brother, he said, adding that he hopes he'll get to play with them too.

In addition to gifts for family members, there were items for pets as well. Winford picked out four goody bags of treats and chew toys for all the dogs in his extended family.



Because the children pick out the gifts, they're more excited to give them, said volunteer Karen Tang. Last Christmas her two sons were proud of the gifts they gave her.

Jackson said several parents have told him the gifts they receive from the Elf Shop are their favorite gifts.

And if parents don't like the gifts, Elf Shop may still be a worthwhile exercise.

"I think it's a good lesson for the children in giving," Carman Bevis said.