



## Laughter, candy & kids

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A few weary students sat among torn wrapping paper and stockings once filled with candy. The room was quiet as whistles, shouts and laughter faded away with the children to wailing cars.

Abel-Sandoz's Christmas party for children from Lincoln's Head Start program had been a success. "It was fantastic," said Ann Thomazin, Sandoz president.

Dorm officers coordinated the party with Helen Miller, a volunteer director at Head Start. "The children's parents were enthusiastic," said Miller.

Individual floor governments were contacted, and volunteers were paired with the pre-school children, said Thomazin.

About 34 children attended the party, including a few from the program for the pre-school visually impaired (VIPs).

Miller said she was grateful for the individual attention given to the children so that no child was left isolated in a corner.

"The children particularly like to be entertained by the boys," said Miller. "They're with women so much of the time and many don't have fathers. They like to be with young men," she said.

The children were treated to dinner in the dorm cafeteria, although many of them appeared too excited to eat. One little girl was so fascinated with her student partner that she could only stare, following him everywhere with her eyes.

After romping all over the dish conveyor belt, the children were given a tour of the dorm and visited students in their rooms.

An hour of this was enough to wear out some students. Sagging wearily against a pillar, one student said his little girl ran up and down five flights of stairs and still hadn't slowed down.

Later everyone met in the Abel lounge where two Christmas trees surrounded by presents greeted them.

Santa appeared, with skinny legs and a lump of stuffing above his belt, and succeeded in delighting the children as he gave out the presents.

Each package carried a child's name. Miller said Head Start teachers found out what the children wanted and relayed this information to Thomazin's committee.

Although on the skinny side, Santa was apparently real enough, for one little girl impulsively ran up and gave him a kiss as he bent over to listen to her.

Santa was surrounded by children before he made his exit. Santa, Abel resident Chuck Flinnig, said "I got a lot of satisfaction out of doing it."

It was a toss-up who was enjoying the party more, as students sat on the floor to help the children try out their new toys.

This is the second year Abel-Sandoz has given a party for Head Start children. Money for the meals and presents was provided by dorm activity funds, said Thomazin.

"The students have been very generous with their entertainment, gifts and transportation," said Miller. "It was a great idea," she added.

To qualify for participation in Head Start, children have to come from low-income families, she said. For many of the children, this will be their only Christmas party.

photos by Howard Rosenberg

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