Over 300 ‘Grandfriends’ visit elementary students

Huntington – “Let’s see: we have Mom, Dad, Grandma, Grampa. What else are you thankful for?” asked grandfriend JoAnn Funaro-Graydon, as she and Kindergartner Emmett Swanfeldt worked together making leaves for their Thanksgiving Tree in Renee Boylan’s Kindergarten classroom.

“FOOD!” answered Emmett, with enthusiasm.

This is the third year that Chester and Littleville Elementary School students and teachers welcomed grandparents and ‘grandfriends’ to school, the half-day before Thanksgiving. The event was created by elementary principal Megan Coburn, to recognize the unique bond between children and their grandparents (or grandfriends). Students who do not have a grandparent in the area may also opt to invite a “grandfriend”—such as a neighbor or someone from church.

Gateway parking lots were filled to capacity, with some classrooms having more grandparents/grandfriends than students! Some of the guests were there to visit multiple grandchildren, and time was allotted in the morning’s schedule for them to move between classrooms.

It was another record-breaking year for the event, with 237 Grandfriends visiting Littleville students, and 81 visiting Chester Elementary School.

Each child’s teacher planned a special activity for children and guests to do together. Students were grouped together so that children could share their grandparents/grandfriends with peers whose grandparents were not able to attend.

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*Photo: Kindergartner Emmett Swanfeldt and Grandfriend JoAnn Funaro-Graydon create a Thanksgiving Tree on Grandfriend’s Day at Littleville Elementary School.*