

# Rice students play Santa with gift of books

By Brian Lysaght  
staff writer

Five-year-old Nicole Holland was smiling as she turned the pages of her new book, "Play Ball, Amelia Bedelia."

"I'm going to take it home and show it to everybody," said Holland, a kindergarten at Stewart Elementary on Detroit's near west side. Young Nicole and each of the 430 other Stewart students received a new book from Birmingham Brother Rice students participating in the "The Gift of Reading" program. As part of the program, the Brother Rice boys became book buddies for Stewart students.

After donating and gift-wrapping the books, 43 Brother Rice seniors delivered them Monday morning, accompanied by principal Brother George Grenley, theology department chairman Jay Louis-Prescott, and librarian Sara Daniel.

"WE ASKED EVERY student to bring in one book," said Louis-Prescott. "I teach all the seniors and every one of them brought in at least one book."

Daniel talked with Stewart teachers to ensure they got enough books at the proper age level. The Rice students were eager to visit the school, Daniel said.

"Reading is so important. It's Christmas, and we wanted to make

sure everyone had a book," said Mike Martin, 17, of Birmingham. After delivering the books, the Rice students read stories to the elementary school students. Mike Martin, 17, of Bloomfield Hills, read "The Bears' Christmas" to a group of second graders.

"I would have liked this when I was their age, to have someone different from their regular teacher come in to read to them," Price said.

JUST AS POPULAR as the book deliverers were Fabian Boyer and Mike Houbbs, who delivered candy canes to students.

Stewart Elementary is a pre-kindergarten through fifth grade school on 14th Street near Livonia. Principal Althea Masterson said her students were excited about the Rice students coming. On one wall was a computer-generated sign reading "Welcome Brother Rice."

Masterson said the school has a high proportion of disadvantaged students, and most seemed thrilled to open their early Christmas presents. Louis-Prescott said about 100 students volunteered to go to Stewart. Fewer than half that could fit on the bus, so the school drew lots to decide who went.

Daniel said she hoped the ties between the two schools would continue, perhaps with another event planned in the spring.



STEPHEN CAHILL/staff photographer

Lamar Johnson, left, looks engrossed as he listens with classmates Monday to the story of Who-ville in the Dr. Seuss classic "How The Grinch Stole Christmas." About 40 Brother Rice High

School students went to Detroit's Stewart Elementary, where Johnson goes to school, to deliver children's books and candy.

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