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EVERY KID NEEDS A CHRISTMAS

-- THE OPPORTUNITY CENTER IN OAK LAWN HAS CHILDREN WITH PLENTY OF NEEDS TO BE FILLED, AND GENEROUS DONORS STEP FORWARD.

ICISS FERNANDEZ, The Wichita Eagle

Decorated for the holiday season, the Opportunity Project learning Center's multipurpose room was where Dajah Clarke, 4, became a mind reader Tuesday.

While Santa Claus was giving out presents, she knew exactly when her name would be called.

"It's going to be me next," she said, jumping up from the floor and pointing to herself.

Dajah was one of 175 children at the center in Oaklawn to receive gifts that included mittens, hats, a new pair of shoes and a toy. The Opportunity Center serves low-income students.

The gifts were made possible by donations and money from several area organizations, said executive director Janice Smith.

Among them was Discovery Place, a local preschool that adopted about 120 kids from the center and bought them new shoes. The preschoolers saved coins and even did extra chores to pay for them, said director Dene Nelson.

"Every year we do a community service project and every year we adopt a family," Nelson said. "This year, because we already have a relationship with the Opportunity Project, we've decided to adopt the school."

About two months of planning went into the event's third year. All the center's children, including infants, received gifts.

"Our goal was that every kid have a Christmas," Smith said.

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