

'Tis the season for the tiniest Tulanians

December 20, 2018 10:00 AM Alicia Jasmin

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Hand-made ornaments adorn the "Giving Tree" during the annual holiday celebration at the Newcomb Children's Center on the uptown campus of Tulane University. (Photo by Paula Burch-Celentano)

Tulane University is known widely for its top-ranked collegiate experience, but there is another cohort of students on campus busy learning about nature, science and, this week, the importance of giving.

The [Newcomb Children's Center](#) on the uptown campus celebrated its fourth annual Giving Tree Celebration on Friday, Dec. 14, during which the children and their families joined in the spirit of giving to donate more than 135 gifts to local families in need.

“Through participation in the Giving Tree Celebration, we hope the children can experience the joy of giving gifts to help make someone else feel happy,” said Newcomb Children’s Center Director Julie Smith-Price. “They are learning that we are a part of a community that looks out for one another.”

Local nonprofit organizations provided the center with wish lists for family members ages 5 months to 19 years in early December. Many of the center’s parents said that allowing their children to be a part of the purchase and wrapping of the gift sparked conversations that were much more in depth than they’d expected.

One parent offered her son’s curious question, which led to an important discussion: “Why would a child ask for a shirt for Christmas instead of a toy?”

“Although our children are too young to go out and purchase a gift for another child, they are not too young to begin to understand that some children do not have everything they do,” said Debbie Pavur, assistant director of the center. “They are also not too young to experience that feel-good feeling from being able to help someone else.”

Though a lesson on giving was the top priority, the celebration included refreshments, caroling and a visit by Santa, also known as [J. C. Paciera](#), a staff member in Tulane’s Campus Services.



Tulane staff member J. C. Paciera (a.k.a. Santa) passes a close inspection by inquisitive preschoolers during the Newcomb Children's Center's Giving Tree celebration held Friday, Dec. 14. (Photo by Paula Burch-Celentano)