

# Students at Fitchburg's Goodrich Academy share cheer (and prizes!)

By Elizabeth Dobbins, edobbins@sentinelandenterprise.com  
Sentinel & Enterprise

Updated: 2017-12-20 04:31:37.080846

---

FITCHBURG -- While not all planned to celebrate Christmas at home, every Goodrich Academy student was guaranteed at least one holiday meal this year.

Students at the alternative school gathered Tuesday afternoon to dine with peers and teachers, or -- as several students described it -- their Goodrich family.

"It might seem a little corny, bingo and eating together, but it actually brings us together," said Na'rya George, a senior.

Ten years ago, current Interim Principal Alexis Xarras-Curry and the school's former principal started the dinner.

"I felt bad that a lot of kids didn't have a Christmas celebration, so we decided we wanted to cook for them and make them dinner in their honor," she said.

The event "grew a life of its own" and now draws funding from sponsors and visits from city officials, including Superintendent Andre Ravenelle.

"It's part of creating a culture in the school, too," he said. "It gets teachers interacting with them. That kind of personal connection is what keeps (students) going."

This year the event was sponsored by Il Forno, A & B Tire Service, Brandon Funeral Home, HML Developments, Fat Boys diner and Foster Insurance Agency.

Angely Franco, now a senior, has attended Goodrich Academy since her sophomore year. For her third holiday dinner with the "family" she volunteered to help set up.

"I helped do all the decoration," she said between placing chips on her bingo board.

Franco said the teachers at Goodrich take an interest in her progress and well-being. George agreed.

"Ms. Curry, you can tell by the way she talks to you, the way she interacts with you, she cares," George said.

Fitchburg resident Annisoet Deya graduated in June, but she returned to the school for the holiday dinner -- one of many visits she has made to Goodrich this semester.

"I miss this place," she explained and thanked Xarras-Curry for the celebration.

"There's some people who can't celebrate like this and Ms. Curry is the Mrs. Claus of it all. She brings joy to everyone here."

George said her own family, who are Jehovah Witnesses, haven't celebrated Christmas since her grandmother died. The Tuesday meal -- her main holiday celebration -- was a success, she said.

"I was hungry earlier, I'm full now," she said, smiling.

Follow Elizabeth Dobbins on Twitter @DobbinsSentinel.

Close Window

Send To Printer