

Frosty Walk

*Maya Angelou Elementary School
Pasco, Washington*

More than 100 students and parents at Maya Angelou Elementary warmed the winter night air with carols and songs last December during their annual Frosty Walk. Administrators at Maya Angelou planned the event to bolster good will in the community they serve. The elementary school serves 800 students in grades K-5. It is located in a large, urban neighborhood. In the holiday season, the school's Action Team for Partnerships (ATP) thought it might be the right time to make up for normal school noise with a more pleasant acoustic experience for the neighborhood.

For the last few years, the school had been hosting a caroling session around the playground during the day. This year, with the help of the school's new music teacher (also the ATP Chair), the team decided to bring their music to the streets.

ATP members set to work planning the route and gathering supplies. They purchased candles for each caroler to carry and candy canes for each caroler to eat. They also contacted the local Boys and Girls Club, which volunteered to serve hot cocoa for free after the caroling. Meanwhile, the music teacher collected as many songbooks as she could find. Administrators promoted the event in fliers sent home to parents. Teachers and students also made announcements in the classroom and over the school's loudspeaker system.

From 6:30 to 7:30 p.m. on a weekday winter night, dozens of parents and students gathered on the sidewalk outside the school and, holding their songbooks by candlelight, began to sing. Traversing city blocks around the school, the music teacher led the group through a collection of seasonal tunes, such as *Frosty the Snowman* and *Rudolph the Red Nosed Reindeer*. Children went knocking from door to door in the neighborhood, asking neighbors to come outside and enjoy the music. At the end of the walk, everyone gathered back at the school's gymnasium to warm up with hot cocoa and

candy canes. So many people attended that the group quickly ran out of refreshments.

The event proved so popular with the school's neighbors that one couple sent the principal a thank you note, letting administrators know how much they appreciated the holiday good wishes. Carolers were just as excited to be promoting such excellent holiday cheer.

"Seeing the excitement and holiday spirit on each person's face was uplifting," a teacher said. "What a great way for the school to come together and do something for the community," a parent said.

Thanks to the Boys and Girls Club donation, the event cost the school less than \$100 to implement. Administrators used ATP funds to cover the expenses. The school plans to make the Frosty Walk an annual event. Next year they will order more candy canes and hot cocoa to share with the participants. They also plan several different caroling routes so that the group can split up next year, making it easier for everyone to stay on the sidewalks, follow along with the lyrics, and share the holiday spirit with more neighbors.

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