

BOOK OF DREAMS

Book of Dreams: Readers respond with generosity. 'We have to take care of our neighbors'

BY PATRICIA MACHT

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Winston Holtkamp, 17, left, Finn McGrath, 17, Owen Wilber, 17, Riley Domine, 17, and Rowan Diepenbrock, 19, right, of Boys 4 Bikes, deliver bikes to Stanford Youth Solutions on Dec. 19. The nonprofit raises money to buy bikes for underprivileged youth. JOSÉ LUIS VILLEGAS *Special to The Bee*



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Fifteen foster teenagers and others in need will have new bicycles for Christmas this year. That's thanks to Boys 4 Bikes, a nonprofit group started by five young men when they were third graders and who are now teenagers.

On a rainy evening shortly before Christmas, the five co-owners – longtime friends Rowan Diepenbrock, Riley Domine, Winston Holtkamp, Finn McGrath and Owen Wilber – arrived at the Sutterville Bike Shop in Sacramento, where professional technicians had assembled the bicycles for them.

The damp night didn't seem to bother the young men as they loaded the bikes into trucks and traveled through the wet streets across town. Staffers at [Stanford Sierra Youth & Families](#), which helps people in the foster system, were awaiting their arrival.

Standing in front of the center's Christmas tree, [Karla Zaragoza](#), SSY&F community engagement manager, had high praise for Boys 4 Bikes.

"It is just major..." she said. "The kids who receive these say how much of a difference it makes for them."

With sturdy, serviceable bikes like these, teenagers in the center's program may now be able to get to school on their own, Zaragoza said. Or maybe get and keep a part-time job because they have reliable transportation. Or perhaps play on a sports team.

The Boys 4 Bikes group quietly stacked the bicycles in front of the Christmas tree that graces the center's lobby. Then they walked the bicycles down a hall and into a storage room that suddenly looked like a bike shop. With that, the group completed its 10th year of service to the community.



Riley Domine, 17, left, and Winston Holtkamp, 17, with Boys 4 Bikes, unload donated bikes Tuesday to be distributed to families at Stanford Youth Solutions. José Luis Villegas *Special to The Bee*

Boys 4 Bikes is just one of the organizations profiled in The Sacramento Bee's Book of Dreams community giving campaign, now in its 36th year. And as usual, Sacramentans displayed their holiday spirit, giving generously to help the needy.

MOVED TO HELP

Many donors were moved by the story of Boys 4 Bikes and wanted to help. Others were motivated to provide financial support for a program that matches adult volunteers with children in foster care to expose them to new and positive experiences. Some readers wanted to put dollars behind teaching kids to [eat more vegetables](#). Even a [new sink](#) for the [Stanford Settlement House](#) gained attention.

Contributions were made toward [mobile cooking class supplies needed by Elk Grove Food Bank Services](#). Reponse was overwhelming to help buy a [commercial stove at Loaves & Fishes](#) to feed those experiencing homelessness; and for a request to support a [literacy tutoring program](#).

Others provided donations to purchase [eight multimotion baby swings](#) for a hospital's neonatal unit, especially helpful for soothing opioid-exposed newborns. And some donors wanted to help [Habitat for Humanity cover expenses to repair homes of veterans](#) or pay veterinary bills for rescued Labrador retrievers.

Each donor had his or her own personal reason for donating. Nancy Bukowski, who gives every year to the Book of Dreams, said she has "a soft spot" in her heart for animals and appreciated the story about the rescued Labradors.

"Animals can't do anything for themselves if we aren't there for them," she said. "I have never had a Lab, but I'm concerned about the way our animals are treated and I felt (the Central California Labrador Rescue) is trying to do this all on their own. They don't have a big organization behind them."

SACRAMENTO STEPS UP

Some local businesses use this time of year to maximize their contributions to causes they support throughout the year. Paul Yoder, managing partner of the advocacy, public affairs and association management firm Shaw, Yoder, Antwih, Schmelzer & Lange, said his associates wanted to help Loaves & Fishes get the new stoves it was seeking.

"We wanted as a group to maximize what we can do for Loaves & Fishes ... and the homeless community," he said. "We have to take care of our neighbors."

Some took great pains to make their donations anonymous. One donor gave a \$500 money order to Book of Dreams. In the "from" column intended for the donor's

name, the person simply wrote: “a random act of Kindness.”

Each year can bring a different level of giving, as the economy bumps up and down and the cost of living rises or falls. Fear that charitable giving would contract nationally in 2023 was expressed last summer by Giving USA, an organization that produces an annual report on philanthropy.

In Sacramento, however, the worries proved unwarranted, said [Kerry Wood](#), chief executive officer of the [Sacramento Regional Community Foundation](#), this area’s leading philanthropic services organization. The Sacramento Bee works with her organization to administer the donor funds.

She said residents of the greater Sacramento area always step up.

“When the need arises, Sacramento takes that call seriously,” she said. “They give however they can.”

The foundation, whose mission is to lead, serve and inspire philanthropy for the region, reviews patterns of giving as part of its work.

“We have a very caring community, a very giving community, especially when there is a crisis or specific issues,” she said. “We hope that in these remaining couple of weeks of the year, people will give what they can, to fulfill dreams like those in the Book of Dreams.”

It still isn’t too late to contribute to the Book of Dreams this year. You can read this year’s stories at www.sacbee.com/entertainment/living/helping-others/book-of-dreams/

Next to each story is a form enabling you to direct your donation to a particular cause, or to have your donation spread among all the Book of Dreams recipients. Donations will be accepted into the new year. But to ensure your donation is credited for the 2023 tax year, donations must be postmarked by Dec. 31, 2023.

DONATE NOW

To claim a tax deduction for 2023, donations must be postmarked by Dec. 31, 2023. All contributions are tax-deductible and none of the money received will be spent on administrative costs. Partial contributions are welcome on any item. In cases where more money is received than requested for a given need, the excess will

be applied to meeting unfulfilled needs in this Book of Dreams. Funds donated in excess of needs listed in this book will fulfill wishes received but not published and will be donated to social service agencies benefiting children at risk. The Sacramento Bee has verified the accuracy of the facts in each of these cases and we believe them to be bona fide cases of need. However, The Bee makes no claim, implied or otherwise, concerning their validity beyond the statement of these facts.

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