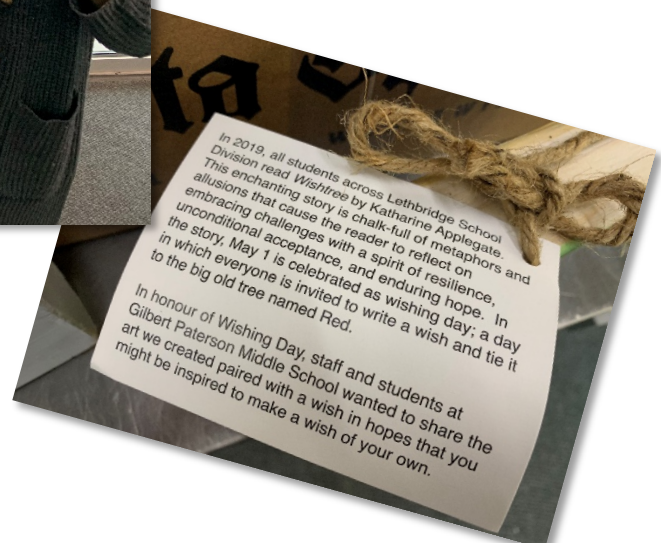




Students make Wishing Day gifts for CRH patients

From left: Shelly David, Gilbert Paterson teacher; Lori Westerson, interim manager 5A at CRH; and Filomena Laporte-Packer, co-ordinator, volunteer resources, with Wishing Day crafts made by students in Grades 6-8 at Gilbert Paterson Middle School.

Each craft bears a tag, explaining the Wishing Day project.



Students at Gilbert Paterson Middle School found a way to brighten things up for dozens of patients at Chinook Regional Hospital this month. On May 1 – also known as Wishing Day – crafts bearing positive messages they created were delivered to the hospital by Shelly David, one of their teachers.

“We wanted to share the art we created, paired with a wish in hopes that you might be inspired to make a wish of your own,” explained a note attached to each one, along with wishes like ‘I hope this makes you smile today,’ ‘I hope you enjoy this project,’ and many others.

Explains Shelly, “Two years ago the entire school division did a novel study with the novel *The Wishtree*, by Katherine Applegate. The story is told from the point of view of a tree, and it has messages about resilience, acceptance, and about perseverance through hard times. One of the activities in the novel is Wishing Day, in which community members come together May 1 every year, write out wishes on a ribbon, and tie the ribbon to a tree.”

May 1, 2020 - the novel study’s first anniversary – arrived when students were learning at home online due to COVID-19, but teachers still marked Wishing Day by sending students a video message to let them know “we’ll get through this, we’re missing you, and we’re thinking of you,” said Shelly. This year, the staff combined efforts and gathered supplies to make wooden blocks, decorated with birds and other animals who are characters in *The Wishtree*.

Every student at the school created a block (some made more than one), and David delivered them to the hospital, seniors’ residences and other Lethbridge locations. Shelly’s sister is Lori Westerson, interim manager on Unit 5A at CHR, who helped with logistics at the hospital. Lori’s son Shaun cut and bagged the wooden blocks (650 of them), making it a family affair. The blocks were quarantined for two days prior to delivery in keeping with COVID-19 protocols.