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## BLOG: GSAS BRAVELY JOURNEY TO THE NORTH POLE

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by GSA Sue Greenbaum, Currier Museum of Art Class of 2010

Twenty-one GSAs drove up to Lincoln one cold and snowy afternoon in December and turned into elves.

They really did, and it was a truly magical experience. That is how the GSA "elves" who participated in the Journey to the North Pole described it. They were right, of course.



The elves, who were told ahead of time to come up with their own "elf name", were asked to arrive at the North Pole Theater Tent early to change into their costumes. They were provided with Elf hats, red mittens, red jackets, green pants, (all in fleece and organized by size) and later put on brown elf coverings over their shoes. Before the show, the elves were given explicit and humorous instructions complete with role playing by the staff, and all felt confident in their roles. The staff couldn't have been more professional, supportive or enthusiastic, as they reviewed exactly what to expect, and how to help with the performance.



Meanwhile, the families were boarding the Journey to the North Pole train and departing on a 15 minute ride to the North Pole. On the ride the adults and pajama-clad children were served delicious hot cocoa by magical chefs.

All the elves were given lanterns and then walked a short distance down the hill to the train tracks to await the families. They spread out along the tracks and swung their lanterns as the train pulled up. The real magic started as the children spotted the elves welcoming them. Some couldn't wait to get off the train and were pulling the windows open, leaning out, and excitedly greeting the elves.

The families disembarked the train and were escorted by elves to the North Pole Theater. During the walk some pretty entertaining conversations took place. Emma, our own Executive Director's teenage daughter, had the cutest interaction with 2 little girls, about age 4 and 6. First they came up to her and asked her name. When Emma said "Twinkle Spice", the girls were thrilled, because they had met Twinkle last year. Of course it was another Twinkle last year, but Em didn't miss a beat. She asked the girls their names, told them she remembered them, and commented on how much they had grown and how nice they were. After the show, the girls ran up to her again with big hugs, and said that they

missed her and would see her again next year. Em was pretty excited that she was able to make their experience extra special with just one comment.

Many children wanted to know if the elves knew their "Elf on the Shelf" at home. Of course they did, responded Elf Happy (AKA Betsy Booth)! She worked in Santa's Post Office, and loved the children who really didn't want to let go of their letters to Santa. It

usually worked to send them to the mailbox across the way.



As the families entered the large tent, the elves stayed outside, handing their lanterns back to staff and forming 2 lines. They waited for the signal to enter, and then skipping with enthusiasm, entered the tent while singing a Christmas song, and headed past the audience to the brightly lit stage. As the show began with a classic reading of the poem "The Night Before Christmas" the elves were having some fun of their own. Elf MoMo (AKA Moe Demers) grabbed a broom and was sweeping the stage. One little girl in the front row was so fascinated by his curled up feet, she just had to reach out and feel them. Was it perhaps to see if they were really curly? When the show concluded one parent called him "The Friendly Elf", probably from trying to engage the children in the first few rows.



Back on stage, other elves were picking up props and having fun incorporating them into the act. One naughty elf, Susy Snowflake (AKA Sue Greenbaum) was lifting each elf's arms and whisking their armpits clean. Other elves were pretending to paint or hammer toys, or string bells, among other things. Each elf was asked what was his name, age and job. The elves proudly announced "I feed the Reindeer!" or "I paint stripes on the toy Tigers" or "I sew clothes for the Dolls!" or "I make Trucks!", and most seemed to be around 500 to 600 years old. All the elves joined in singing the Christmas carols, and by carefully watching the staff in the back of the room, were able to mimic their motions and act out the Twelve Days of Christmas. While this was going on, Santa was making the rounds in the the audience, speaking to each and every enchanted child, and shaking their hands.

Finally the show ended, the elves left the stage singing and grabbed their lanterns again. They waited outside and escorted the families back to the train. After many exclamations of "Merry Christmas!" and "Thank you for coming!", the families boarded the train. As it slowly went down the track, the elves waved goodbye with their lanterns lighting up the dark. On board, each child received a special gift as they rode back to New Hampshire.

There was a second show about an hour later. During this down time, the staff fed us lots of pizza and water. They had way more pizza than than they needed as another group of Elves didn't show up as arranged. The GSA elves professionally and

proudly carried on the show all by themselves. It was a great night to be an Elf!

Some of the elves drove back home that night, and some opted to stay over. Wine, cheese and other snacks flowed in at least one motel room, and old friendships were stoked while new ones were ignited. More than a few GSA elves are already eagerly awaiting next December to join in the fun again.

A big shout out to Elf Okey Dokey (AKA Sue Geyer) for arranging this volunteer excursion. We had a blast!



This 2 hour adventure takes place in Lincoln as well as North Conway, New Hampshire. Net proceeds from the Journey to the North Pole Event fund Literacy Programs of The Believe in Books Literacy Foundation, a Charitable 501(c) non-profit organization.

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