

REACH of Central Florida at the Frontline Outreach Center



Belinda Ford from Rock Orlando Church pick up the toys at the YESS Center



## REACH of Central Florida Outreach ■ By Wendy Ng

Christmas is known as a time for ice skating, family dinners, last minute shopping and the abundance of peppermint flavored food items. However, more importantly, this is also the season of giving. This past December, REACH (Recognizing | Experiencing | Asian | Cultural | Heritage) of Central Florida hosted its annual toy drive benefiting the local Harbor House as well as Frontline Outreach. With the help of over ten local high schools, companies, and organizations, REACH was able to raise over 700 toys for local children.

The Harbor House is a 24 hour safe haven for survivors of domestic violence and abuse that provides a safe home for them at no cost. For over thirty years, this organization has been providing survivors with counseling, daycares for children, professional job training, and other valuable resources to help them get back on their feet. Moreover, Harbor House provides legal assistance for the survivors and is an active ad-

vocate towards the ending of domestic violence and abuse. On December 19th, REACH members went to the organization's main campus and passed out toys to the children. The smile and the pure joy these kids have over getting a new toy is what makes this toy drive worth it.

This is the first year that REACH has partnered with Frontline Outreach, an organization in downtown Orlando that for over fifty years has provided children and family programs for urban youth as young as two years old. Recognizing the potential these kids have, this organization provides academic, leadership, and entrepreneur programs with the hope that they can have a positive impact on their community. On December 20, around 20 REACH members volunteered at the organization's annual Community Christmas Event, helping set up, serve food, and pass out toys to kids. It was a fantastic afternoon filled with singing, dancing, and laughter that truly embodied the Christmas spirit.

On the behalf of REACH of Central Florida, I want to say that it is an honor to have the opportunity to work with two local organizations that are so passionate about helping others. They have definitely reminded all of us the importance of the gift of giving, something that should be given year round, not just at Christmastime. I also want to thank the organizations from Winter Park High School, Cypress Creek High School, University High School, and Freedom High School for their generosity and support of the toy drive. Your donations and hard work are greatly appreciated! Thank you all for helping us bring the holiday spirit to Harbor House and Frontline Outreach this year!



is a senior in University High School's International Baccalaureate program. She is also the president of REACH Of Central Florida. After high school, she plans to go to college and major in either Computer Science or Biomedical Engineering.