

- When I brought my second-grade students to visit a nursing home for Christmas, one little girl helped out more than she knew...

By: Mary Henderson
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- The bell rang. Recess was over. "Okay, class, time to hand in your cards," I said. "We'll be leaving soon, so put on your coats." I was taking my second graders on a holiday visit to a nursing home a few blocks away, and they'd been making cards for the residents. But we needed to get going if we were going to stick to our schedule.

I quickly collected the cards. Folded construction paper with drawings of Christmas trees, presents and snowflakes, and messages written inside. Pretty festive what the kids came up with. Except for one card. It was carefully cut in the shape of a Christmas stocking, but there wasn't any crayon or glitter on it. No decoration at all. "What happened here?" I asked the girl who made it.

"I wrote something special inside, but I didn't get to the front," she said. "Sorry I didn't finish on time, Mrs. Henderson."

"That's okay," I told her. I stuck the card at the bottom of the pile. Maybe there would be enough to go around without someone having to get this plain one. *Rush, rush, rush*, I thought. *Why is everything so last minute at the holidays?*

I led my class on the brisk six-block walk to the home. The kids and the residents were delighted to see one another. Too bad we only had time for a few carols before a snowstorm headed our way. We hurried back to school, leaving the cards with the director.

She called me the next day. "Please tell your class thank you," she said. "The folks here loved having the kids visit. And the sweet cards too."

"What about the last one?" I asked. "It was rather plain . . ."

"It was the only card left when I got to the gentleman at the end of the hall," the director said.

"I'm sorry," I said.

"Don't be. He was overjoyed to get that card. He's blind. He ran his fingers around the edges and said, 'Why, it's a Christmas stocking. How wonderful!' Then he asked me to read the message inside."

She paused. "You know what it said? 'I made this just for you.'"