

Newsday's

FUTURECORPS™

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A LESSON IN GIVING AND FORGIVENESS

Corpus Christi students in Mineola
help young mothers



Marco DeSousa, Evan Smoak, Joe Martone, Brandon Rincon and Jennifer Duval pack items for Momma's House.

Very few of the students of Corpus Christi School in Mineola were even born when New York City Police Officer Steven McDonald was shot while on patrol in Central Park in 1986. But they understood that Officer McDonald, who is paralyzed from the neck down, has a 13-year-old son and that father and son have never been able to play baseball or run together.

Officer McDonald, now Detective McDonald, came to visit the students at the invitation of fourth grade teacher Andrea Nordquist, FutureCorps advisor for the school. His message focused on forgiveness, as he told his audience that his deep religious beliefs led him to forgive the 15-year-old boy responsible for the shooting.

"I didn't know about Officer McDonald," said Brandon Rincon, Student Council President. "But I've learned that he's very special. Our school has an obligation to help where we can, because it's the right thing to do."

At McDonald's suggestion, nursery schoolers through eighth graders orchestrated a paper drive. They collected huge amounts of paper goods, disposable diapers and similar

items to be given to Momma's House, a group of three interim homes for young girls who have given birth and decided to keep their babies. The project is part of Newsday's FutureCorps, an initiative involving students across Long Island and Queens in community service.

Corpus Christi School takes on a special project each year. This year's theme, "Heads, Hands and Hearts, How Can We Be Better People," focuses on tolerance, respect and forgiveness.

"It makes us feel better to know we are helping someone," said seventh grader Jennifer Duval.

"It impressed me that Steven McDonald went to the jail and forgave the person who shot him," said sixth grader Joseph Martone.

"It means a lot to have Steven McDonald here," said sixth grader Marco DeSousa. "His wife was pregnant when he was shot. He never could hold his child."

Nordquist introduced McDonald with a quote from his autobiography. "The greatest gift is to feel. Not touch. And the hardest task is not to move. But to be moved."