

Mountz students show appreciation for school staff

Thanksgiving-themed
Gratitude Project
organized by PTA

BY PATRICK REILLY
THE COAST STAR

SPRING LAKE — Walking into H.W. Mountz Elementary School, all who enter are greeted with a colorful paper tree decorated with leaves from students thanking the school's teachers and employees for everything that they do.

The Gratitude Project was organized by PTA members Diane Moran and Jen Cozzarelli, who said that this would be a nice gesture of appreciation for all of those who work at the school, especially during the challenges presented by the coronavirus pandemic.

"We were just trying to be creative in these times in regards to boosting morale at the school for both the kids

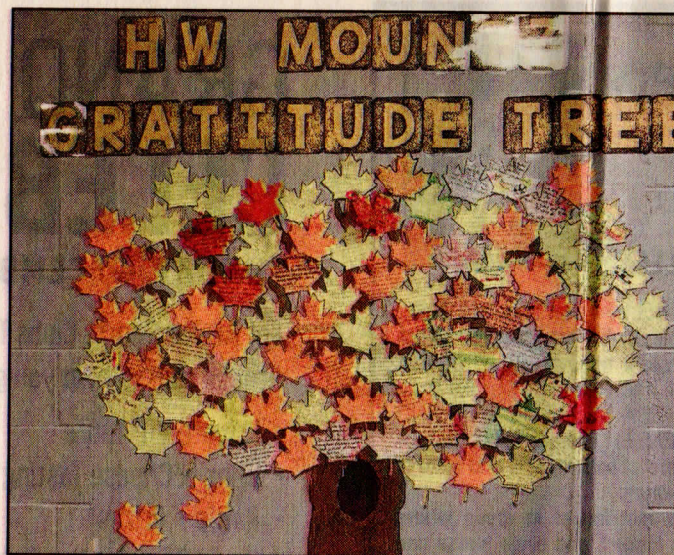
and everybody in the building," Ms. Moran said, adding that they were hoping to create something visual that everyone could see.

"We wanted it to be displayed, so we handed out leaf stencils to all the students in the school, and we asked them to write the name of someone on the leaf that they are grateful for inside the school."

The leaves on the "Gratitude Tree" are not just for teachers, but custodial staff, aids, the nurse or even a friend that has helped out. The students were asked not only to write the person's name but explain why they chose that person.

This week, the leaves have started coming in after the students were sent home with the project, making the fall tree look like its blooming.

"The wall is now getting filled with these leaves, and we tried to put it in high traffic area so everyone



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The H.W. Mountz Gratitude Tree is made up of leaves that students have filled out with the name of a school staffer whom they are thankful for.

can see it. It's just meant to boost morale around the school, and you love to see your name on there or see who the kindergarteners are grateful for," she said.

"It's a visual representation of gratitude for these people who work so hard to keep them safe and learning in the building."

The PTA is also sponsoring a weekly raffle where

each Friday they spin a wheel, and award two members of any of the school's staff a pizza pie that they purchase as part of the 8th grade fundraiser. The first raffle was last Friday.

The organization will also be adapting one of its annual holiday traditions, which is to have a member of the PTA or volunteer cook batches of cookies every single day of December for the school staff, which is usually supplied in a tray.

"We know we can't do that exactly but we're still having parents make cookies, we're giving them a deadline and the PTA board is going to sort them and put together mini bags or boxes so that every staffer gets a variety of christmas cookies," Ms. Moran said.

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