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Lewis-Palmer D38 Public Deliberation Outreach, Nov. 6

Community members, facilitators discuss sixth-grade and options for Grace Best



Above and on facing page: Facilitator Carrie Bennett explains the results of public deliberation regarding sixth-grade students in the elementary vs. the middle school. Photo by Harriet Halbig.

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beginning at 12 pm Tree Lighting with Santa at 5 pm



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- Stuffing Mix
- Cranberry Sauce
- Gravy (cans, jars, mixes)
- Cream of Mushroom Soup • Canned fruit pie filling



By Harriet Halbig

The Lewis-Palmer school district sponsored a Nov. 6 community outreach forum in the form of a public deliberation exercise on the use of Grace Best Education Center and the pros and cons of moving sixth-grade students from the elementary schools to the middle school.

This forum is part of the Long Term Facilities Planning process that began early this year and has included sur-

veys and several committee meetings including community members, district staff and administration, and RTA Architects, the consultants who have sought and organized the information into several scenarios.

Attending the Nov. 6 forum were three school principals, two candidates for the Board of Education, a student, and about 40 members of the public, divided into roundtables of about eight persons each. Each table was served by a facilitator who encouraged those participating to listen to one another with an open mind. An attempt was made to have a diverse variety of viewpoints represented at each table.

Carrie Bennett of Learning Through Difference LLC, was the facilitator for the event. She explained the ground rules for the deliberation.

Participants were provided with a wealth of background material on both questions.

As part of her explanation, Bennett said that there is a category of problems that has no set solutions but instead involves trade-offs, is values-based, and is open to different interpretations. An example of such a problem would be prioritizing water use among urban users, farmers, and recreation. The issues under discussion that evening were of a similar nature.

The ground rules simply required individuals to listen to one another, balance participation so that no one viewpoint or individual dominates the conversation, and respect one another's differences.

The sixth-grade discussion took up more than half the time spent. Some of the considerations were:

- · Safety of remaining in the elementary school vs. new opportunities and expanded course choices in middle school
- Travel time and proximity of the neighborhood elementary vs. more distance to the middle school
- Maturity level of sixth-graders and wheth-



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