

## Karate kids' program helps needy at Christmas

By Patricia D'Ascoli

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Northern Star Karate has a history of giving back to the community.

This year, Jim Hull, who owns the New Milford Korean martial arts school, decided to do something a little different. Instead of buying Christmas presents for children, Northern Star held a fundraiser and donated the proceeds to two local charities.

This was no ordinary fundraiser, however. Students at Northern Star sold tickets to a martial arts demonstration that was held on Dec. 9 at Sarah Noble Intermediate School. More than 400 people attended the event.

"This was a theatrical performance in which 50 students, ranging from ages 4 to over 50 participated," Hull said, noting that funds were distributed to the Santa Fund and to Trish's Market, a food pantry that serves residents of Butterbrook and Glen Ayre senior housing complexes.

Hull, who lives in New Milford with his wife Denice, daughter Lindsay and son Taylor, said that the idea for what he calls an "extravaganza" came from a desire to showcase the skills of his talented students in a new and exciting way.

Northern Star students have regularly performed shorter demonstrations in venues such as the Village Fair Days, the Bridgewater Country Fair and Relay for Life.

"This was an opportunity for us to really take our time and showcase a wide variety of skills and have a lot of fun doing it," said Hull, who is a fifth-degree black belt and has been involved in Korean martial arts for more than 20 years.

The hour-long performance, called "Fist of Buddha," featured creative displays of martial arts skills, both traditional and non-traditional, such as sword and shield fighting. The performance was based on a story written and choreographed by Scott Jones, a Northern Star student and third-degree black belt.

According to Hull, the students engaged in highly choreographed and complex fight scenes throughout the performance, which provided an opportunity for the students to get creative in a way that is not possible during typical martial arts competitions.

"There is nothing like this in our area," Hull said. "The performances tell a story. It really captures and motivates an audience and they really enjoy it."

Trish Skelly, who is the program manager at Butterbrook and Glen Ayre, was delighted that Northern Star designated Trish's Market as one of the charities to receive a portion of the proceeds.



*Michelle O'Hara, 11, left, practices her karate moves with Jessica Esposito, 10, under the watchful eyes of Jim Hull, owner of Northern Star Karate of New Milford, which recently gave a demonstration at Sarah Noble Intermediate School that raised money for the Santa Fund and Trish's Market.*

Skelly said that she created the pantry as a way to help supplement the residents' food supplies in the face of a recent rent increase.

Skelly, whose son and daughter are students at Northern Star, notes that Trish's Kitchen has previously received bags of food donated by Northern Star.

"The best thing I ever did was join Northern Star," Skelly said. "Not only do they show and teach respect, they do things for the community."

Nancy Camp, coordinator of the Santa Fund, said that the donation from Northern Star was a nice surprise. The Santa Fund uses the money it receives to purchase gift certificates so that families can buy turkeys for Christmas.

"It helped us out a lot," she said. "We were very grateful."

Hull is glad that Northern Star can help out those in need at this time of year. "We wanted to make the holidays a little brighter," he said.

- Northern Star Karate is located at 145B Danbury Road. For

more information contact (860) 355-8469 or visit [www.](http://www.northernstarkarate.com)

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