

The LEADER

Cas Krolak Holiday Card Drive begins

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HORSEHEADS - The 2016 Cas Krolak Holiday Card Drive was officially kicked off Wednesday at Horseheads Middle School.

What began as a service project by Sophie Kartzman and some friends in 2013, has grown into a community-wide outreach in order to generate cards for soldiers and veterans.

"One of the main reasons for this was to get kids volunteering, but also to show our support to our heroes - which are the men and women in the military," Kartzman said. "We really appreciate everything they have done for our country and we wanted to let them know that."

The middle school program, which amassed more than 27,000 cards in 2015, has set a goal of 30,000 cards this year.

"We've had many goals so far - and they just exploded," Kartzman said. "We had a goal of a 100 cards - and we got 1,000. We wanted 1,000 cards and we got 13,000. Last year, we wanted 15,000 cards and got 27,000. That was amazing.

"Now this year, we're aiming for 30,000 cards and I'm really wanting to see what that's going to explode to."

Wednesday's event featured presentations by the Horseheads National Junior Honor Society, as well as a tribute to Casmir Krolak - a WWII veteran, who recently passed away in August.

Krolak family members in attendance included his nephew Bill and his wife Clara Krolak, as well as Joanne Krolak, Cas' niece.

"A year ago, when I first heard of it, it was a pleasant surprise to find out my uncle was involved," Bill Krolak said. "He really enjoyed this. It really added something special to his life.

"He really wanted to be a part of something that meant something and the veterans really meant something to him. He was so happy to be a part of this and it meant so much for him to get involved."

Elected officials Congressman Tom Reed, State Senator Tom O'Mara and Assemblymen Chris Friend and Phil Palmesano were also on hand to make presentations to Krolak's family and other servicemen and veterans in the audience.