

## Lindenhurst Children Learn to Give During Easter

By JOSEPH

LINDENHURST – Adults weren't the only ones in Lindenhurst getting into the charitable spirit of Easter. About 200 children from the Lindenhurst Early Childhood Center (LECC) recently made about 500 Easter baskets for needy children and families throughout Lake County. **The baskets are a part of the "One for all Coalition" – a charity put together by the Open Arms Mission and the 100 Percent Foundation.**

LECC teacher Toni Levy said the children loved putting the baskets together.

"They were crying the day before about having to stop making the baskets," Levy said. "They wanted to make more."

The children crafted the baskets from candy, toys, beanie babies, and stuffed animals – all of which are donated from local companies and the parents of LECC children. The parents also help deliver the baskets before Easter.

Kindergartner April Graham said putting the baskets together was really fun.

"I like putting the stuffed animals in," she said.

Levy described preschooler Olivia Clower as a basket making machine.

"The Frisbees were my favorite thing to put in," Clower said.

LECC Executive Director Frank Davis said the idea for the "One for all Coalition" started from conversations held among 2003 Forefronts participants. Forefronts – an annual section of the Lake County Journals highlighting individuals for their public service – has an awards breakfast in honor of the participants every year.

Scott Keenan, director of Open Arms Mission; Ricky Bueno, founder and director of Front Line Street Interventions; and Davis formed a close bond during the breakfast.

"The three of us have stayed in touch ever since," Davis said.

During their first year of the Easter Basket Project, Keenan, Bueno, and Davis delivered about 300 baskets.

This year, they plan to deliver more than 2,000 baskets to organizations in northern Illinois – DCFS Foster Care Division, Lake Villa Food Pantry, Avon Township, Stroger County Hospital, Kid's Hope United, Core Center for children with AIDS, and Lutheran General Hospital are among many other organizations receiving baskets. A wide range of people – ranging from parents, Lake High School students, local pageant queens and the Lindenhurst Early Childhood Center children – put the baskets together.

"It seems to get bigger every year," Levy said.

Davis believes events like this one are an important learning experience for children.

"We are teaching the children to give to others," he said, "rather than only receiving."