

NEWS

College pledges support

STAFF and students are helping to feed people in need this Christmas season.

Gateshead College has pledged its support to Gateshead Foodbank and has delivered food to the warehouse.

Jo Dunkley, a college tutor who helped to organise the initiative, said: "As part of the College's Christmas appeal students and staff donated food to the foodbank and received an excellent response.

"People have been very generous and their kindness will go a long way to making this Christmas a little brighter and happier.

"The students really enjoyed helping the team and gaining experience in such an environment, and they are really looking forward to going back in the New Year.

"Voluntary placements like this one provide a fantastic opportunity for the students to improve their team working and social skills, while they also use maths and other key skills."

Matty Hopper, warehouse manager from Gateshead Foodbank, said: "The youngsters were a great help."

Police hunt car vandals

VANDALS have gone on a wrecking spree after damaging three cars with paint.

It happened overnight between the evening of Sunday, December 15, and the morning of Monday, December 16, when three cars parked at Ninth Avenue and Tenth Avenue in Heaton, Newcastle, were targeted.

Purple paint was daubed on the cars, two with a letter 'S' and one with a letter 'T'.

Neighbourhood Inspector Louise Cass-Williams said: "This is mindless damage which is costly and frustrating to the vehicle owners and we're carrying out enquiries to trace the person responsible."

Anyone with information should call 101.



■ Stuart Maclean and son Oscar, four months, from Boldon



■ Little Grace Smith, three, from Sunderland with dad Paul

Basketball stars bring Xmas cheer

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TOP basketball stars brought smiles to the faces of poorly children in hospital.

Members of Newcastle Eagles took time out of their busy schedule to bring a bit of festive cheer to youngsters at the Freeman Hospital's Children's

Heart Unit.

Families were delighted to see the players as they handed out mini basketballs when they went around the heart unit and intensive care ward.

Newcastle Eagles player-coach Fab Flournoy said: "When you go around the wards it puts everything into perspective.

"We were delighted to visit children at the hospital and bring a lit-

tle smile to their faces and help raise spirits at this time of year."

Dad Stuart MacLean, of Boldon, South Tyneside, was at the children's heart unit with his son, Oscar, four months old.

The tot was born with hypoplastic right heart syndrome, where only half his organ is working.

Oscar, who has so far had 10 operations, has only been home for one day in his short life. It is hoped he will be home for Christmas Day.

Stuart, 35, who work for the RAF, said: "It is great when you get a surprise visit from sports stars and it does help to lift spirits."

Little Grace Smith, three, was born with a congenital heart block and had an operation on Monday to get a pacemaker fitted.

Her mother, Caroline Walshaw, 42, of Hylton Castle, Sunderland, said: "It is fantastic to see the Newcastle Eagles players on the ward as it's very exciting for the children."

Newcastle Eagles has teamed up with the Children's Heart Unit Fund (CHUF) to help raise vital funds and awareness of the worthwhile cause.

During the festive season many sports personalities and pillars of the community visit children at hospital.

Today a group of fire-fighters are delivering presents to the youngsters.

Liz Bailey, directorate manager of cardiothoracic services, said: "It is a difficult time for children and their parents to be in hospital. Visits help lift spirits, particularly at Christmas."



■ Fabulous Flournoy and Oscar Maclean



■ Players from The Newcastle Eagles basketball team with Emily Linaker, 14, when they dropped Christmas presents off for children at the Freeman Hospital heart unit