

## Thumbs up, thumbs down: Show love



Alissa Gomez, president of the Dinuba High School Acts of Kindness Club, collected treats and drinks for parents who wait long hours in Valley Children's Hospital while their sick children recover. The Fresno County Clerk's Office inspired the donation.

### SPECIAL TO THE BEE

Thumbs up to the **Fresno County Clerk's Office, Alissa Gomez of Dinuba and the Dinuba High School Acts of Kindness Club** for showing a whole lot of love over Valentine's Day. The clerk's office was open on Valentine's Day until noon to issue marriage licenses, as is its tradition. It's always a party atmosphere, so they select a local charity to support during the celebration. The Sweet Eats program was this year's charity. Sweet Eats was created in memory of Hendrix Wille, who died at age 3. His parents are Art Wille, an attorney for Fresno County, and his wife, Roze. The charity has kitchen space at Valley Children's Hospital, where they stock food and drinks for the families who are spending long hours with their children at the hospital. The County Clerk's Office invites county employees to get in on the fun. One employee, Amanda Hernandez, took home the invitation and her daughter, Alissa Gomez, presented the idea to her Kindness group at Dinuba High. Next thing you know, they were knee-deep in treats, doubling the donation the Clerk's Office had already collected. The students also made 200 Valentine's Day cards to present to the patients. Lovely.

Thumbs up to **Danay Ferguson**, 8, who is the youngest person in Fresno County history to file a business name, Reading Heart. She registered the name because she wanted to open a bookstore, but when she realized not

everyone can afford to buy books, her mission changed. Now she is donating books to hospitals and plans to set up a nonprofit. Last week she was presented the African American Heritage Award in the youth division. She is getting plenty of support at home. "Our belief as parents is they are never too young to learn," said her father, Dwayne. "It doesn't matter if she's 8 or 18. If she wants to do it, let's go for it." Heads up, Craig School of Business recruiters.

Thumbs up to **Sounds of Freedom military concert band** for snagging an invitation from Muriel Bowser, mayor of Washington, D.C., to perform in its Memorial Day parade. The 55-piece band is all volunteers and it's been delighting listeners since 1986, giving 49-50 concerts a year. The group is crowd-sourcing funds to cover its expenses. Donations can be made online at [freedomsounds.weebly.com](http://freedomsounds.weebly.com) or by mail at AUSA Central California chapter, Sounds of Freedom, P.O. Box 441, Clovis, CA 93613. Toot your own horns, folks!

Thumbs down to **Fresno's slumlords** for preying on low-income families and violating building codes. Well, look out, whole groups of volunteers are coming after negligent landlords. The latest watchdogs are Fresno folks conducting a new social media campaign to improve the living standards of low-income renters around the city. No More Slumlords is an advocacy group that has launched an eight-minute video and online petition urging city officials to help improve subpar properties. Sergio Cortes, a media production business owner, told The Bee's Andrea Castillo, "We realized no one is doing this in Fresno: documenting these stories, putting them online. We recognized the power of social media and the power of multimedia to compel people to action." Other organizations, such as Faith in Community, are also working to address neglected properties. City leaders created a task force. By March that group could present the City Council with an ordinance to change some of the city's policies and codes. Cortes is right when he says low-income residents should not have to choose between living on the streets or in slum-like conditions.

Suggest future thumbs up or down suggestions by writing to [letters@fresnobee.com](mailto:letters@fresnobee.com).