

# SALUTE *to our* ESSENTIAL WORKERS



## *School food service workers made fast changes to supply kids, families*

BY JEFF KIESSEL  
ASST. MANAGING EDITOR

Donna Garrow said the past nine months has been a rollercoaster ride for her and her staff at the Ludington Area School District food service program.

Garrow, food service director, said the staff received the news on Friday, March 13, that the schools were closing due to COVID-19.

"We had to flip everything that we were doing to still feed the kids on Monday," she said.

School districts across the state and along the lake-shore from Whitehall to Manistee and Baldwin to Reeths-Puffer were faced with the same issues as Ludington.

Ludington's staff sat down and figured out how to feed the students. In the beginning — albeit with a larger staff — the food service department started by packing individual food bags, one breakfast bag and one lunch bag, according to Garrow, per student.

The staff, at that point, was working like a well-oiled production line packing individual meals for each stu-

SEE FOOD SERVICE ON PAGES 6 & 7

## Lakeshore Medical personnel share experiences dealing with COVID-19 at home and at work

BY JARED LEATZOW  
WHITE LAKE BEACON REPORTER

WHITEHALL - It has been almost a year since the first reported cases of COVID-19 in the United States.

Dr. Joseph Taylor, DO and physicians assistant Sceon Kraai from Mercy Health Physician Partner Lakeshore Medical, 905 E. Colby St., both have said that the way they practice medicine has changed since the beginning of last March when Michigan was initially shutdown by Gov. Gretchen Whitmer.

At the time of the shutdown, most of the of the confirmed cases of COVID-19 were from the Metro Detroit area, but overtime the virus crept its way over into West Michigan. Even when it finally reached Muskegon

County, the White Lake Area was one of the areas to be least affected.

At the time Lakeshore Medical things were still operating basically as they had been in the past with people coming in the same way they always had been. But now COVID-19 cases are at their peak in Michigan, and things have had to change.

Kraai said in order to keep people safe Lakeshore Medical has designated a specific block of time each day to see patients who either do or are believed to have the COVID-19 virus. These appointments all happen after 3 p.m. and have to be scheduled in advanced.

She said that before things were more family friendly at the clin-

SEE MEDICAL ON PAGE 8



Dr. Joseph Taylor, DO

## *Grocers supply what's needed during pandemic*

BY BARBARA GOSSELMAR  
OCEANA'S HERALD-JOURNAL CORRESPONDENT

In this time of Covid, we are all grateful to our essential workers for their service. In thanking them, we often think first of health care and public safety workers, but those who serve us in our local grocery stores are also essential to our health and well being

these days. They serve at the risk of their own health, so that we can have the quality food we need for ourselves and our families.

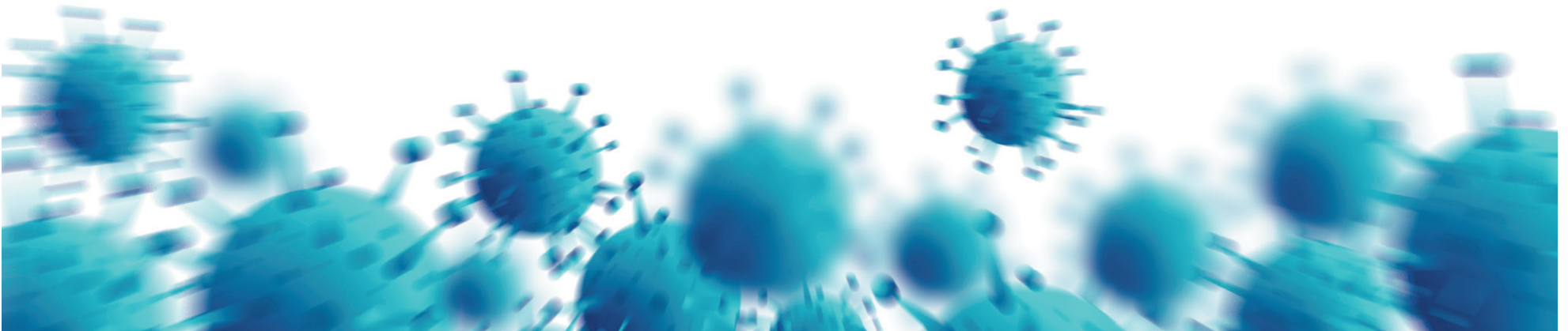
Among those local grocery stores are Ed's Orchard Market in Hesperia, Cherry Hill Supermarket in Shelby and Hansen Foods in Hart. The owners of these local businesses are clearly working hard to assure the safety of their

employees and customers, and they have been doing so since the early days of Covid in March.

Each of them has implemented the recommended and required Covid protections: being extra vigilant on sanitization at check-outs and shopping carts, having their employees wear masks, posting signs to encourage customers to wear masks and social

distance, and providing hand sanitizer. In some cases, plexiglass screens were installed at checkouts, and areas where people congregate were marked for 6-foot distancing. Another precaution has been to eliminate self-serve options such as the self-serve donut case, packaging the donuts for sale instead.

SEE GROCERS ON PAGE 4





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## GROCCERS SUPPLY WHAT'S NEEDED

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

As Scott Rumsey of Ed's Orchard Market says, "The goal is to keep customers comfortable, so they feel safe." And Dave Hansen of Hansen Foods concurs, noting, "Our customers are our family. Our employees are troopers. They know people have to eat, and we do everything we can to keep them safe and the customers."

According to Rumsey, the employees at Ed's Orchard Market are self-screening every day when they punch in by answering a list of questions. While the store is not taking temperatures, no employees have tested positive. He further remarks that there have not generally been concerns among the employees about coming to work. Though some high school students who do bagging and carry-outs for the store were kept home by their parents at the beginning of the pandemic, they

are back at work now. Also, the store has noticed some issues on the warehouse side, where people have been exposed and there are not enough staff to load the trucks.

"Our goal has been to keep people aware of what's going on, and that we still have work to do to get us past this," Rumsey emphasizes. "I can't say enough about the people who work here at the store. For a small town like this who depends on us, it means a lot to me that my staff continues to come and are stepping up."

Dave Hansen relates that Hansen Foods has 80 staff members and sees about 10,000 people a week. Given these numbers, the store has been taking temperatures of its staff and writing it down. Employees have not expressed concern about continuing to work during this time, and with respect to safe practices, he just tells his employees, "Use your common sense. If

it seems wrong, don't do it." Hansen Foods is doing curbside and delivery of groceries, because, as Hansen indicates, "We're the Mom and Pop of the community, and if people call and feel like they shouldn't be coming in, we need to serve them."

At Cherry Hill Supermarket, Ken Trombley reports, "You do what you have to do or what they tell you to do. We obey the law. We do the best we can do, and people are getting better about complying (with the restrictions)." No one at Cherry Hill has gotten sick, and all are still reporting to work except one who took early retirement.

Rumsey, Hansen and Trombley all agree that, as for customer compliance with masking requirements, the stores just have to do their best to see that everyone is wearing a mask when they come in. They really can't put their staff in the position of enforcing the regulations, so they're

probably not 100 percent, but most of the customers are cooperative in observing the mask requirement.

All the stores report that there have been some shortages of products, especially in the early days of the Covid restrictions. Cleaning supplies, paper goods, staples such as pasta, rice, flour and other baking supplies were limited, and the stores set their own limitations on purchases. These days, supplies are slowly building up again, though the stock of certain items or brands may be low. The good news is that prices from the warehouses have not increased significantly, and business is good. With the shut down of restaurants and fewer options for dining out, Hansen reports that he has heard the grocery business has enjoyed an uptick of at least 10 percent during this time. He is aware, however, that this is at the expense of restaurants like Big Hart Brewery,

Top left: Staff of Hansen's Foods, top right: Ken Trombley of Cherry Hill Supermarket; and bottom photo: Scott Rumsey of Ed's Orchard Market.

which his wife operates, and he feels badly for these businesses. On the up side, Rumsey says, "People are learning how to cook again."

What is clear at this difficult time is "Nothing is normal," according to Trombley. Hansen chimes in, "It is what it is. We've just got to keep going." And, Rumsey comments, "The biggest concern is Covid fatigue. As

the hospitals fill up, the reality has hit." In any event, while the current situation remains, it is clear that the local grocery stores are doing their best to meet the needs of the community for a safe, service-friendly shopping experience where customers and staff share the responsibility for keeping everyone healthy and well.

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## FOOD SERVICE WORKERS MADE FAST CHANGES

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

dent that was handed out to students and family members at specific drop off sites throughout Mason County.

Garrow said instead of dealing with individual bags, the staff did everything in bulk and placed

those meals into one bag. "If they order four kids, then you can give them four cereals, four milks, four fruit," Garrow said. "We switched to doing it that way, which was even better. It is more efficient."

Garrow said the kitchen invested in an Oliver machine, which allows food to be placed in trays and sealed.

"It will be easier on the crew because we will not have to grab so many different items as we load up. We can just grab a tray. It has three components of the meal, and all we will have to do is grab a milk or a fruit with it," she said. "The fruit is separate because the food in the tray is microwavable or openable so they can heat it up and the fruit is not getting warm that way."



The change will be a blessing for the food service program, and it will help out tremendously, according to Garrow.

With all that is going on with food service, Garrow said schools' freezers have a different look because of all of the rapid changes from adapting to the COVID-19 pandemic.

"We did the boxes of food for the families as well," she said. "On Wednesdays, we would get 150 of the cheese boxes, 150 of the fruit boxes and 150 of vegetables boxes. Plus, our regular items to do the food for the virtual learners. The cooler and freezer has just been a zoo for us."

Garrow said in the early months of the pandemic, her staff was much larger and nine months later the staff dwindled to five people including herself.

Those include Pam Collins, Deb Roberts, Cindy Marker and Kaylyn Buckner, plus three volunteers who

help with the distribution of food for virtual learners. The staff is assisted by teachers Deb Follrath and Heidi Urka and athletics secretary Martha Hamilton.

Garrow said her staff is doing a lot of scratch cooking for the meals and not using a lot of processed meals.

"I know a lot of the schools are using pre-packaged food, but I think home-cooked meals are a little bit better," she said. "We are doing a lot of that on our virtual meals."

Garrow said when they first started providing bagged meals they were using more processed stuff and then it was getting too hard to get from the district's distributor.

Over the Christmas break, Garrow planned for a distribution on Monday, Dec. 21, and provide six days of meals. The same thing was planned for Monday, Dec. 28.

Garrow and her staff received a special certificate

from the Michigan Department of Education with regards to the district's food service program. The department stated at the time of its communication that it served 123,966 meals. The special recognition was presented by Superintendent Jason Kennedy at December's regular board of education meeting.

"Our food service staff has gone above and beyond to ensure that the kids and families of our school district receive nutritious meals during this pandemic," Kennedy said. "It is important to recognize the food service department under the direction of Donna Garrow. (It) is to be commended."

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LUDINGTON DAILY NEWS PHOTOS  
BY JEFF KIESSEL



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# MEDICAL PERSONNEL SHARE EXPERIENCES

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

ic, but now appointments have to be scheduled in advanced and people who are not being treated aren't allowed into the building.

From a personal standpoint she said she feels a bit like an outcast. Which has made it difficult in more ways than one.

She said she hasn't seen her extended family in months, and each day she changes out of her work clothes in the garage before running and jumping into a hot shower.

Kraai has a younger daughter, and her medical career initially made it difficult for her and her husband to find child care.

"I work more now than I normally do. We can't do daycare and I have elderly parents that can't really watch her," said Kraai.

Thankfully, her husband Travis Kraai, has a job working for the New Era Elementary School that allows him to work from home. So, he is now able to care for there daughter.

The isolation caused by COVID-19 at one point started to cause some issues with anxiety in Kraai's daughter. Kraai and her husband began taking their daughter to see a therapist to work through some of the issues, which eventually resulted in them buying a puppy to help her cope.

Earlier in the year her dad had to have open heart surgery, and Kraai said she wasn't able to visit him.

"My dad had a heart attack and open-heart surgery. I wasn't able to see him, I was terrified I could give it to him, said Kraai.

Professionally, Kraai said she has had two co-workers take time off because of the virus. In her head she is always wondering if she's going to be next in the office.

Prior to COVID-19, Kraai said she would spend a lot of time with patients trying to get to know them, but that isn't really the case anymore. Now, she said, she tries to spend as little time as possible with them since transmission of the virus can happen in as little as 15-minutes.

"I've been a PA for 12-years now, and I worked through the swine flu, but I've never seen anything (COVID-19) like this.

To stay healthy and sane Kraai said she exercises every morning around 5 a.m., and when she gets a day off – which doesn't happen often – she likes to spend it with family outdoors. She also said her husband and daughter avoided spending Thanksgiving with their families.

In terms of his work life Dr. Taylor, much like Kraai, has been extremely busy with work with little days off. He said Lakeshore Medical has been open and he has been working non-stop through the pandemic.

Dr. Taylor, who also has a young child, said he is following all the protocols laid out by Mercy Health, the Health Department and The Center for Disease Control at work; but even still when he comes home, he makes sure to change his clothes and shower prior to coming in contact with them.

Both he and Kraai have had patients pass away from COVID-19. Taylor in his interview went on to say that so far, he's lost four or five of his patients to the virus.

"[One was] a lovely man that I got to know that passed away. It was difficult to swallow," said Taylor.

Taylor said he has been able talk some about the loss, but has to do so making sure not to give away any information that would violate the patient's privacy.

Earlier in the year he said he maybe saw only three or four people for the entire months of January and February. But now he might see as many as seven or eight people in an afternoon for COVID-19.

Not all of the people he is seeing are from in-person visits either. He said he is having some of his appointments over the phone or through a video call as well.

Taylor said one of the things he misses the most is going out to dinner with his family. But said sacrifices do need to be made to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

In terms of staying healthy he said he takes a multi-vitamin every day, tries to stay hydrated by drinking water, takes all of his prescribed medications, and exercises three to four days a week using the exercise bike and weights he has at his home. Taylor said to help manage his stress he tries to make sure he is getting enough sleep every night, and likes to go outside and walk his two dogs.



Sceon Kraai

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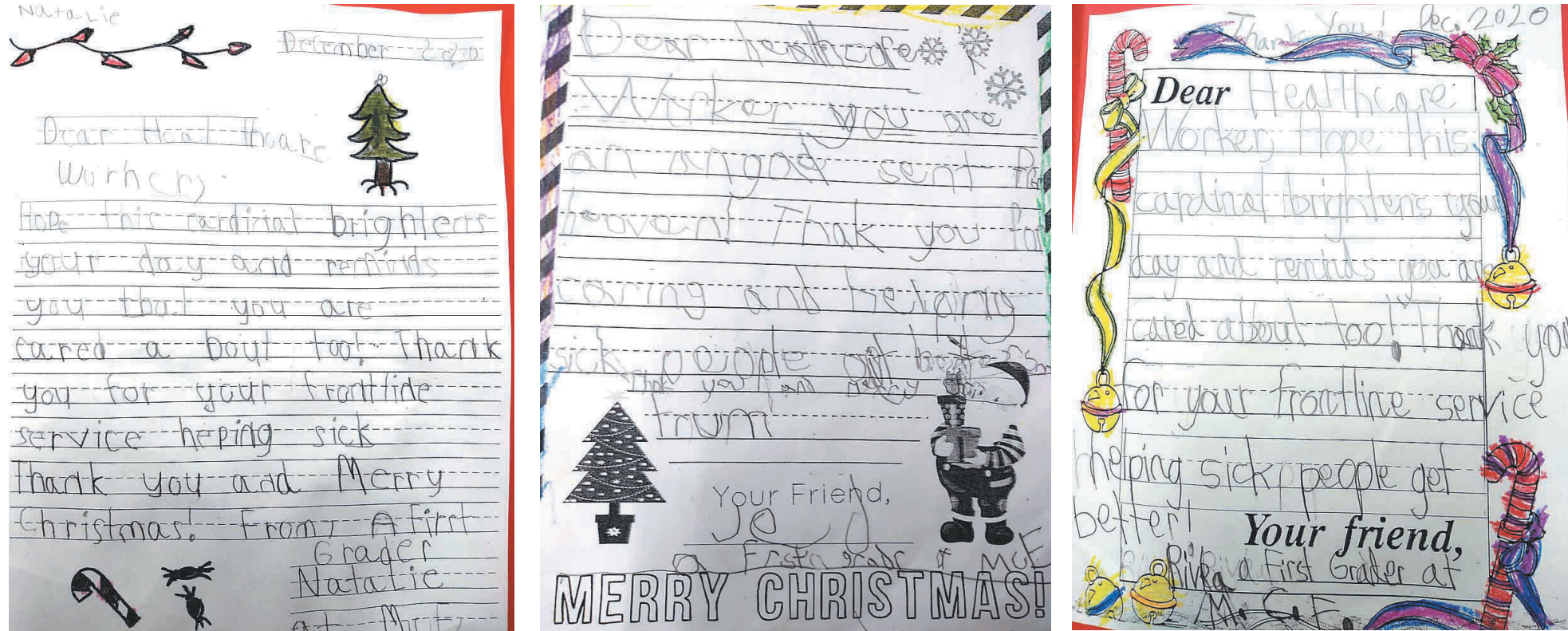
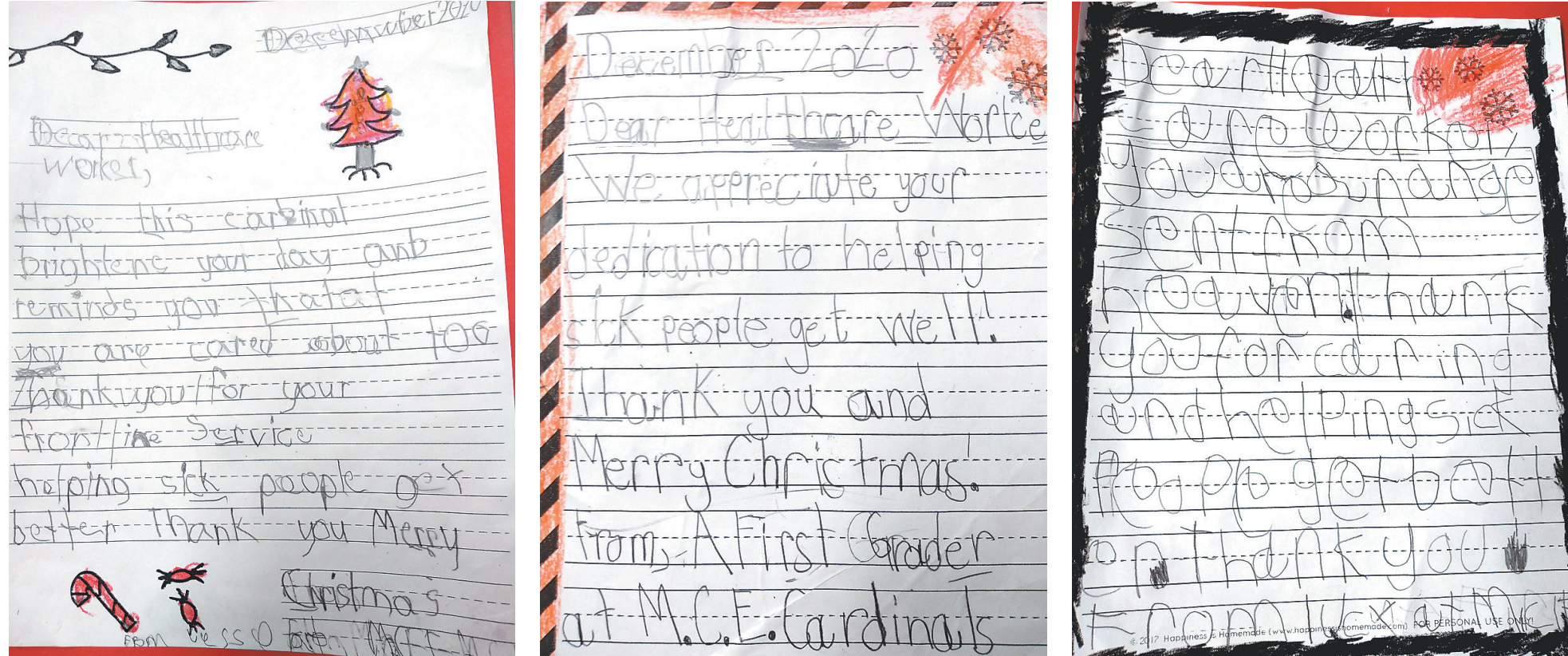
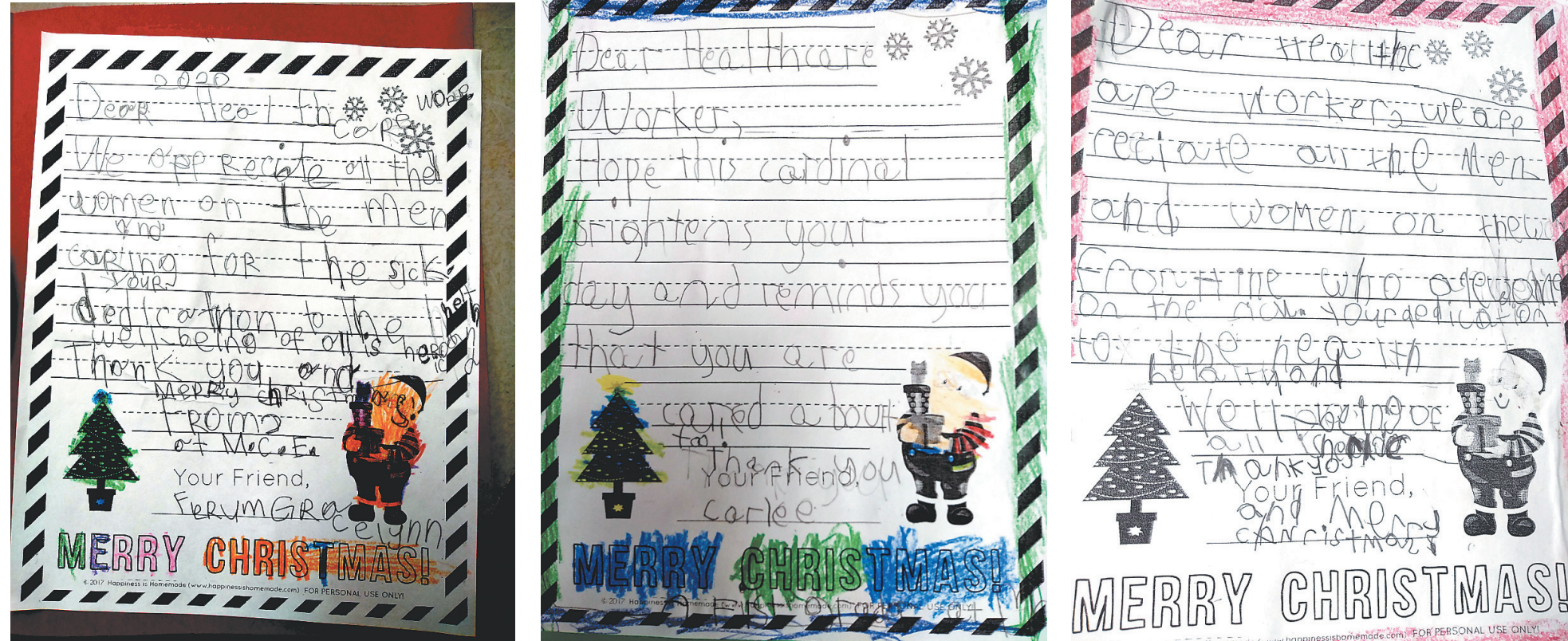
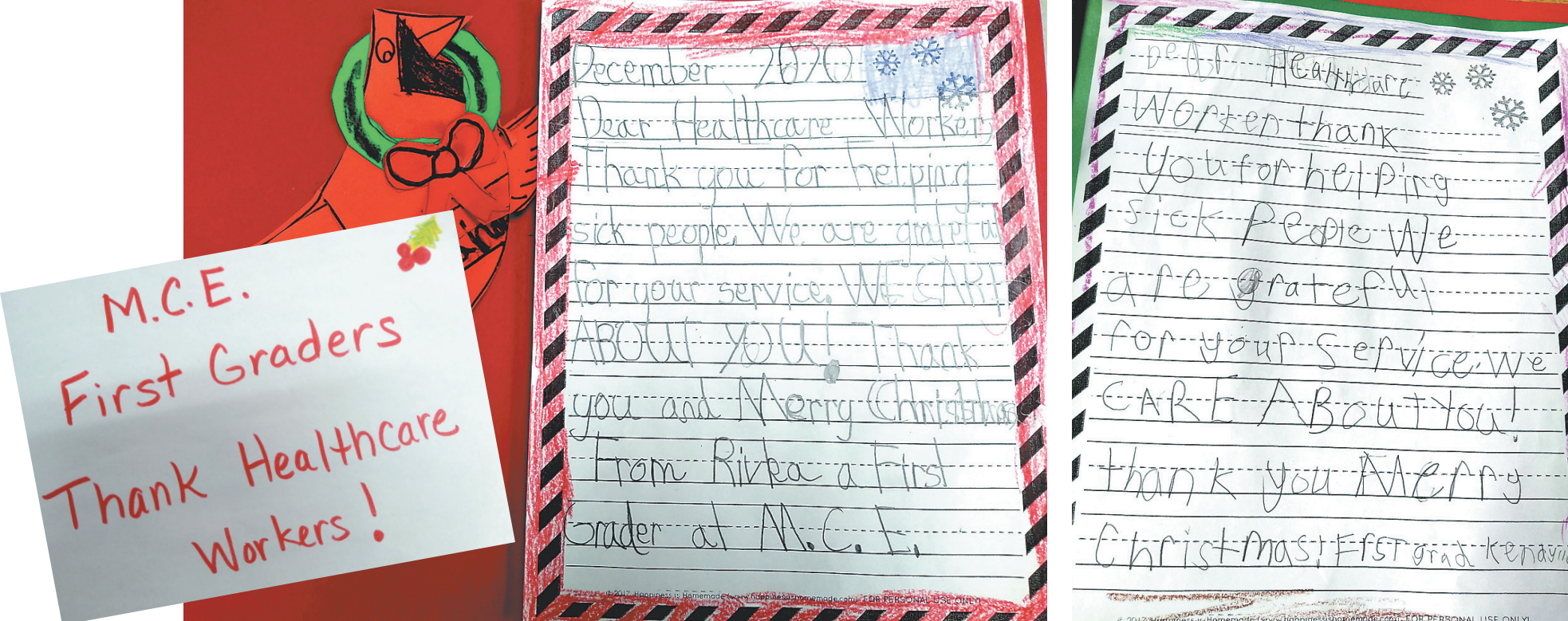
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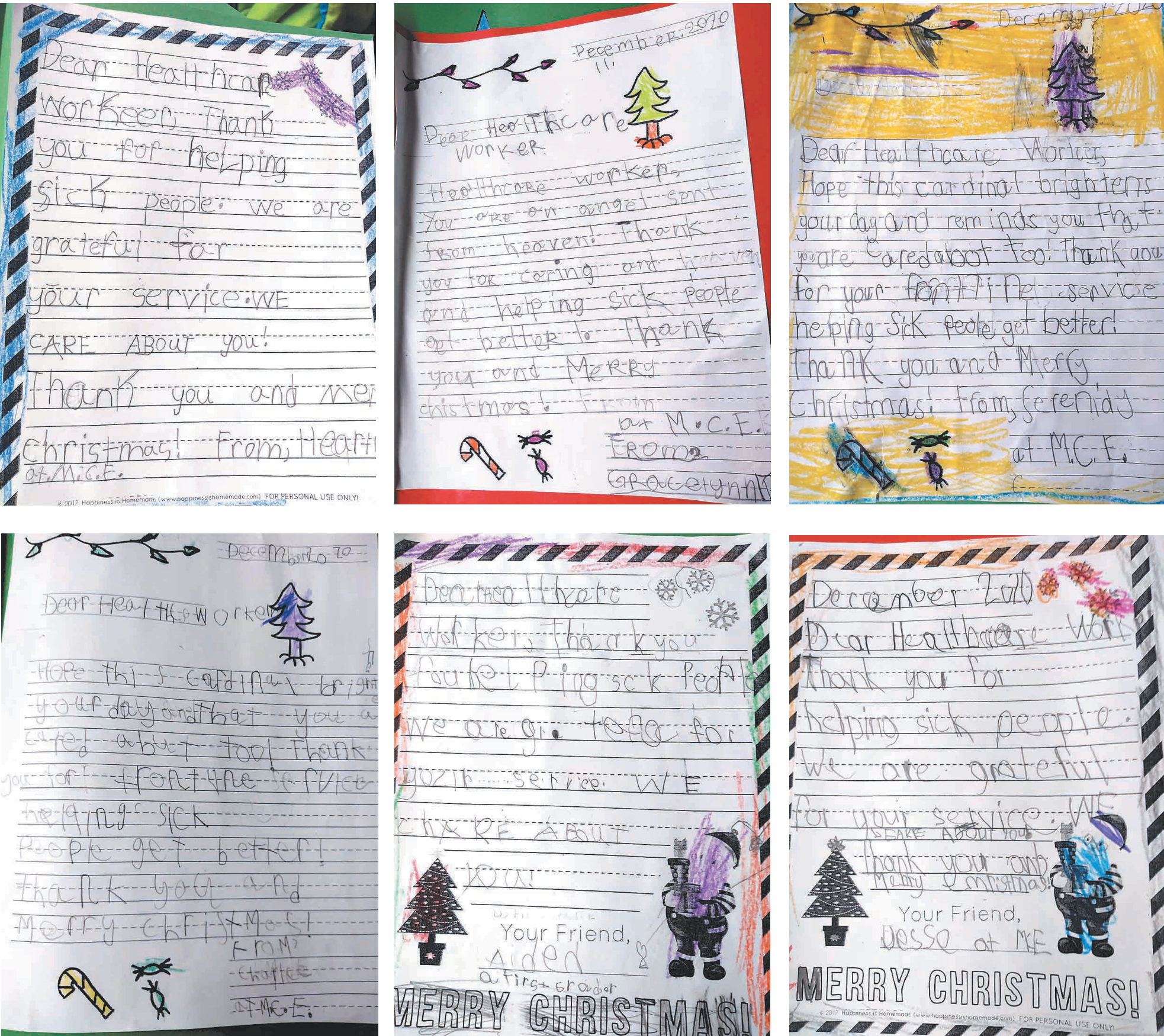
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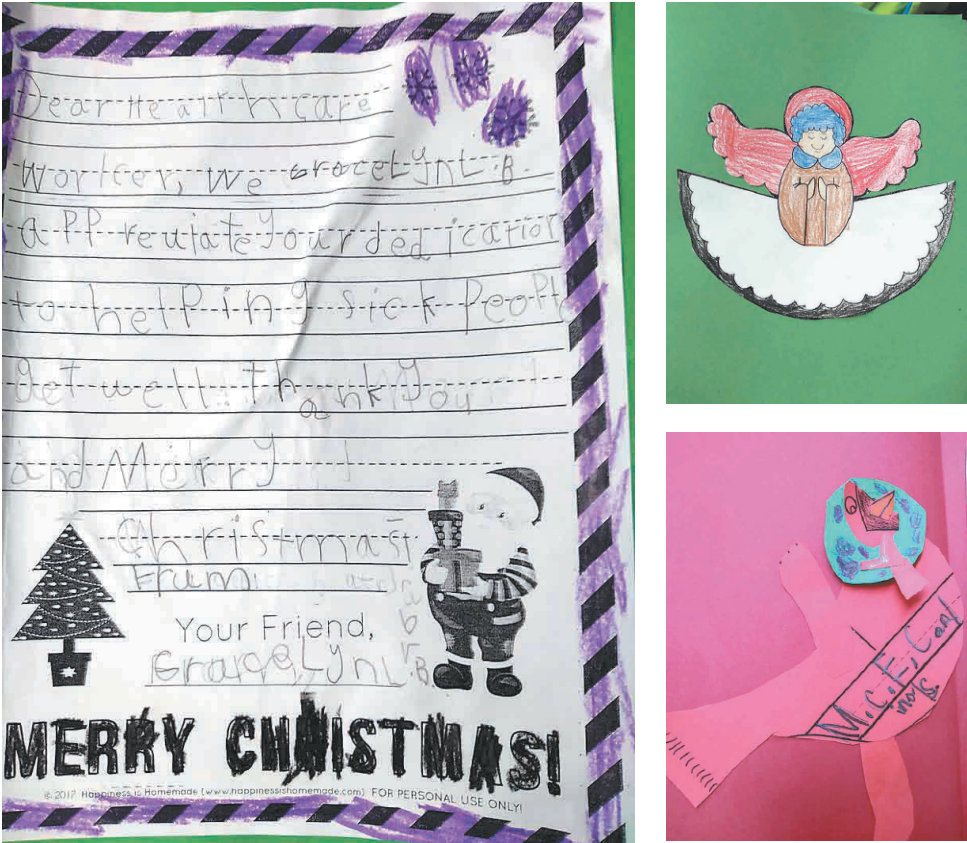
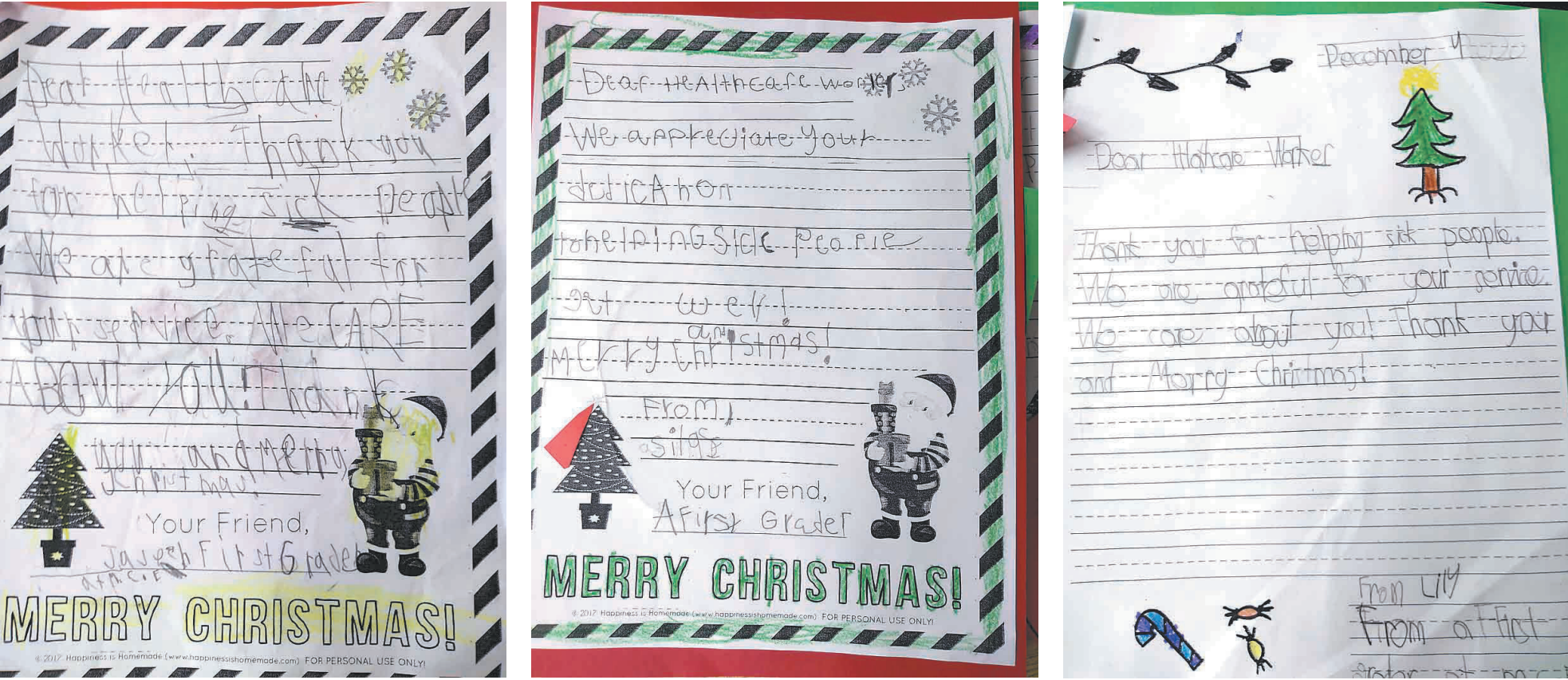
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# THANK YOU

to all the frontline workers that have been there helping our community navigate this pandemic... and for leaving your family to care for ours!



*WE APPLAUD YOU!*

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*Thank You*  
**Little Caesars Team**  
*for your hard work while serving our community during this difficult time!*



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# We're here, still delivering through it all









The Ludington Daily News, Oceana's Herald-Journal and White Lake Beacon want to thank you for continuing to support us. We've heard your compliments of just how essential we are during the pandemic as we have endeavored to tell the stories of our community, whether it was those stories that dealt with the many facets of this disease and its effect on all of us or to provide you an escape with features and news stories that have nothing to do with the disease. As you've grown to trust us through the decades, we're proud to deliver on that trust now and into the future. Through good times and bad, the Daily News, Herald-Journal and Beacon are right there with you, sharing your stories. It's because of these fine folks here — and the many, many more unseen — that we will continue to do so. Thanks to all of our essential workers, including ours here at our newspapers.



