



## Aiken Prep Students Give Gift of Music

By Donna DeTroye

On December 17<sup>th</sup>, Aiken Prep students from grades 3K through 5<sup>th</sup> grade took to the stage to give the gift of music and entertainment to their families. Planning for this event began at the beginning of the school year. Music and drama

teacher Helen Church and 5<sup>th</sup> grade teacher Angie Gurley worked together to coordinate this long-standing Aiken Prep tradition.

This year, both the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> graders were given speaking roles in the production *Santa Goes Green*. It is the story of an environmentally aware Santa whose dream of the negative effects of global warming on the North Pole transforms his elves and reindeer into a recycling team. As she has done in the past, Church actually wrote the dialogue for the play. "I enjoy doing it. They are such talented students," said Church. "When writing the play, I thought of the characters I had in the children when I created the characters in the story." Former fashion designer, Church also makes most of the costumes herself with help from parents. "She's very creative," said Gurley. "She is an amazing person."

Every grade performs on some level, but the student actors and actresses have the toughest parts. "It was fun," said 5<sup>th</sup> grader Aaron Sklizovic, who played the role of Santa. "Singing my solo in front of all those people was the hardest part," said 4<sup>th</sup> grader Olivia Oswald. "I learned we can reuse a lot of things," added 4<sup>th</sup> grader Evan Ortaldo.



Aside from learning acting skills and elements of stage production, students have the opportunity to grow as individuals. "It's a lot of work," said Church. "But seeing the children's self-confidence develop is the real reward." Head of School Debbie Boehner said, "The teachers turn a production like this into a learning experience. This play gives students a chance to build self-esteem outside of a classroom setting." Families and students packed the Aiken Prep gym Thursday night for another successful holiday production.