

Eagle Valley MS students SOAR in service to others

By Teri Vance
Special to the Appeal

Patrons needing to check into the homeless shelter in Carson City will find a helpful surprise waiting for them.

Students in Eagle Valley Middle School's SOAR program assembled goodie bags containing water, juice, granola bars, socks, soap, toothpaste and other toiletries for those seeking shelter at the St. Teresa of Avila Catholic Church.

"We're so fortunate to have what we have," said McKenzie Merrell, 12. "We have roofs over our head. Some people don't even have that. It made me feel really good to help people who haven't had as much. Especially in the winter, it gets cold and they need these things."

SOAR, which stands for Students Offering Additional Resources, offers students service and other community-oriented activities as a means to remain drug and alcohol free.

"It helps make kids more responsible and have a brighter future by keeping them safe from bad choices," said Jocelyn Pedersen, 12. "It just gets us prepared for when you're older and



CATHLEEN ALLISON

Jocelyn Pedersen, 12, speaks in a SOAR club meeting at Eagle Valley Middle School in Carson City, Nev., on Thursday, Jan. 10, 2019. The club, Students Offering Additional Resources, is run by Partnership Carson City, offering students service and other community-oriented activities as a means to remain drug and alcohol free.

Photo by Cathleen Allison/Nevada Momentum

in college without our parents."

In its second year, the club meets every Thursday.

"It's a very welcoming club," Merrell said. "We're always doing different activities to learn about the dangers of drugs and ways to help other students. It's a safe place, very friendly and helpful where you can be yourself."

The prevention and service club is an affiliate of Partnership Carson City, a coalition of local agencies working to create a drug-free, healthy community.

"I love working with this group," said Samantha Szojka, the youth program coordinator for Partnership Carson City. "They're a breath of fresh air. They're excited to be here

and they're excited to be involved in the community, which is awesome."

Pedersen hopes their acts of kindness will create a sort of ripple effect.

"It felt good knowing I was just making one more person smile," she said. "You're helping someone have a good day and hopefully they'll do that one day for others."