

CHARITY

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Wellcome staffers and children of the Boys' Brigade make gingerbread cookies together as a way to celebrate how food brings people closer. Photo: May Tse

GINGERBREAD EVENT ALSO FEEDS THE SOUL

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The icing on the day? Wellcome not only helps decorate cookies, it gives away goody bags of food

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Members of the Boys' Brigade made gingerbread houses to take home last week, learning that nothing nourishes the soul more than sharing food with loved ones.

The event on Friday was hosted by supermarket chain Wellcome, which is raising funds for Operation Santa Claus (OSC) for the first time. Sixteen Wellcome employees volunteered to help 35 boys and girls, aged eight to 11, decorate house-shaped gingerbread cookies with icing.

Huang Wanqi, 10, who has been a brigade member since she was six, flexed her artistic muscles to create an intricate house with white, pink and yellow icing. "I drew a house that I want to live in," she said.

Chan Ka-wai, captain of the brigade at the Shek Kip Mei Centre, in an underprivileged area of the city, said of the volunteers: "It is good for the kids to interact with these big broth-

ers and sisters ... They are the positive role models that these kids do not interact with often enough."

Since it wouldn't be Christmas without hearty food, each child received a bag of groceries from Wellcome, filled with staples such as pasta and canned food, to keep tummies from rumbling over the holidays.

Choo Peng Chee, Wellcome's chief executive, said the company chose to work with OSC because it shares the same commitment to brightening the lives of the underprivileged. In Wellcome's case, the focus was on the celebration of food to bring families closer together.

"As a company that serves the daily needs of Hong Kong people, Wellcome understands the impor-

tance of family," Choo said. "We constantly search for ways to promote eating at home and spending quality time with your loved ones."

Wellcome began two other community initiatives recently: it partnered with local food banks to launch food coupons for the underprivileged, and every Wednesday it offers the elderly 10 per cent off two house brands, with more than 1,300 products.

Jointly organised by the *South China Morning Post* and RTHK, Operation Santa Claus has supported more than 100 charities since it was founded in 1988. This year, it will raise money for 16 Hong Kong charities.

Boys' Brigade aims to promote Christian values as well as obedience and discipline. Set up 52 years ago, the organisation has more than 9,700 members.