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Gardner-Webb University Community Delivers Food to Hungry Children

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Office of University
Communications

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Healthy Bulldog Backpack Program Involves Staff, Faculty and Students

By Bryton Mitchell, ('17) GWU Intern for Communications

BOILING SPRINGS, N.C.—For Lou Ann

Scates, taking care of hungry children in the

surrounding area is extremely important and always has been. “When my son was growing up and going to school, I saw kids in his class that I knew were going to bed hungry,” recalled Scates, Gardner-Webb registrar. “I could not imagine a little kid not having enough to eat.”

While discussing the problem with Susan Manahan, assistant professor of biology at Gardner-Webb, an idea was born—The Healthy Bulldog Backpack Program. Since that day about five years ago, the program has been providing underprivileged children from Springmore Elementary School in Boiling Springs, N.C., with healthy food delivered in backpacks every two weeks. “We went to Springmore and talked to the social worker, Mary Crotts, and she was all for it,” Scates explained. “We started out with 20 children, providing them with backpacks with 16 or so items.”

The program strives to provide a variety of food items that are healthy and filling. Scates share that children need a combination of protein and carbohydrates like mac and cheese, beans, peanut butter and soup. “Although we try to be as healthy as we can, every once in a while little children deserve a treat,” Scates offered with a smile.

Soon, Scates faced her first problem. “The social worker emailed one day and said the

kids love the backpacks,” she explained. “But then she said there were three kids on the waiting list. I said, ‘No, there is not a waiting list.’” They immediately added three kids to the program.

She explained that Crotts now identifies which children should receive backpacks, and when a child qualifies they are immediately put onto the list. Presently, 36 children are receiving food. Crotts expressed to Scates that for these hungry children, receiving a backpack full of food is comparable to opening presents on Christmas.

People need to know there are children in their own community who need help, indicated Scates. Currently, she's working to develop a pamphlet that will help with the promotion of the Healthy Bulldog Backpack Program. "We hope to have the pamphlet out in the community by December," Scates said.

Along with the pamphlets, Scates has been exploring other ways to promote and grow the program. Recently, she hosted a Parade of Tables in order to raise money. "I was surprised by the number of people who wanted to participate and decorate tables," Scates explained. "We have a lot of talented people here at Gardner-Webb."

Volunteers decorated 40 tables for the fundraiser and nearly 320 tickets were sold.

Many participants gave donations. Scates explained that all profit went straight into the backpack program. "We're hoping from this fundraiser that we will have enough money to pack the backpacks every week instead of every two weeks," Scates predicted, "because 16 items every two weeks is not enough for these children."

Even though the fundraiser was a success, Scates is in constant need of food items. "We have some folks who donate items every once in a while, but mostly some of my staff and I go and pick up the items needed," she disclosed.

Donations of individually packaged, non-perishable food items for the Healthy Bulldog Backpack Program may be brought to the GWU Registrar Office located in the Dover Campus Center on Gardner-Webb's main campus. Office hours are from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., and donations can be brought in any weekday. Cash donations are accepted, and volunteers are also needed.

Scates hopes to continue to grow the backpack program and host the Parade of Tables annually, but has the ultimate goal of feeding every hungry child in the surrounding area. For more information regarding the Healthy Bulldog Backpack Program, contact Scates at 704-406-4260 or lscates@gardner-webb.edu.

Springmore Elementary School Social Worker
Mary Crotts fills the backpacks for the children.

Located in Boiling Springs, N.C., Gardner-Webb University's purpose is to advance the Kingdom of God through Christian higher education by preparing graduates for professional and personal success, instilling in them a deep commitment to service and leadership, and equipping them for well-rounded lives of lasting impact, Pro Deo et Humanitate (For God and Humanity).