



Helping Children in the Reading Community

Your Mission Support Dollars helped this ministry!

For the past 4 years Grace has hosted a Back to School event at their location on the southern side of Reading, PA. This community project started when 4 congregation member volunteers agreed to assist on a project suggested by Rita Wilk at church council. Rita's dream was to hold an event open to all community members where needed school supplies and backpacks could be given out to students. Donations were obtained from the congregation of Grace along with other churches within the West Berks Mission District. Reaching our targeted recipients was simplified by piggybacking on the resources established by our Growing with Grace Tutoring program. This tutoring program serves the 2 elementary schools within a few blocks from our church location. In addition local press releases were issued to inform the community.

Assessing the event after the first year, the church felt the event was of value to the community we serve and to the school students in the Reading School District. The strength of partnering with our Growing with Grace Tutoring program contacts enabled our success.

To make a greater impact, additional funds were needed to expand the number of backpacks and supplies offered. Financial funding was secured thru corporate donations, grants, and individual donor donations. Over the past 3 years, grants have been written and granted from Witness and Service Team Ministry of Northeastern PA Synod*, Thrivent, and Walmart.

From all of this a record number of backpacks were distributed in 2018 - 250 new stuffed backpacks. Our expanded efforts allowed for growth in our impact to 5 elementary schools and 1 junior high school, in addition to hosting the event at our church. New underwear and socks were distributed to over 180 children. Gently used clothing was offered again and an expanded healthier lunch with multiple choices completed the on-site activities this year.

We do all of this because having the correct supplies to foster a sound education experience is critical to a successful outcome. These supplies will impact a child's academic performance and long term self - esteem. A teacher whose class benefited from our program tells us that children are unable to finish assigned homework because of the simple fact they have no pencil or pencil sharpener. If we can stop this from happening our time and efforts have been well spent.

Submitted by: Ann White-Back to School Committee @ Grace Lutheran

- ***Mission Support helps fund the Witness and Service Team Ministry Grants.***
- ***Find more stories of how we are doing God's work with our hands at: nepasynod.org or like us on our facebook page Mission Interpreters of NEPA Synod.***



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