

MICAH MESSENGER

Mission Newsletter
December 2019



White Bear Lake
**UNITED
METHODIST
CHURCH**

Nourishing the Hungers of Life

*He has told you,
O mortal, what is good;
and what does the LORD
require of you
but to do justice,
and to love kindness,
and to walk humbly
with your God?*

- Micah 6:8 -

At the November 14 Bookfair sale 110 students in grades 1 & 2 selected special books to take home as their own. Great fun!

Photo: Bob Fulton helps a student shop.



“UP and OUT of POVERTY”

Church-School Partnership — Willow Lane Elementary

Article submitted by Tammey Busch

A Path Appears – How Faith In Action Began

In 2015, the Faith In Action Ministry was formed as the result of a book study and a challenge posed by our Pastor, Brooke Heerwald-Steiner. A small group of us were reading and discussing a book called “A Path Appears: Transforming Lives, Creating Opportunity.” The authors described a range of overwhelming world problems: poverty, lack of education, sex trafficking, violence and more. Honestly, it was seriously depressing. The problems were so big. How could anyone solve any of them?

That’s when the Pastor asked us to come to our last meeting with an idea about how we could make a positive difference in the world. What did we want to do? One idea was to sponsor a child in Guatemala through Common Hope. Another idea was to provide free books to 1st graders at their scholastic book fairs. Inspired by the feeling that we really could make a positive difference through specific actions, a group formed that day and took its name: Faith in Action.

What is Read5000? The Mission.

The goal of Read5000 is to place 5000 books into the hands of first graders. But the mission is not really just about the gift of a free book. It’s bigger than that. It’s about trying to make a difference in breaking the cycle of poverty. It’s about taking one small action to try to do so – one child at a time. We are trying to create joy and a love of reading so that students have a greater chance of success in completing their education.

According to author and speaker Donna Beegle, an expert in the crisis of poverty research has shown:

- Youth living in poverty are the least likely to become educated in our nation and of those who do make it to college, only 11% leave with a degree or certificate
- For students who come out of the foster care system, only 3% leave with a degree or certificate
- A college education can help people break the barriers of poverty, yet...It is less likely a person in poverty will attain a college education than it was in the 1940’s

- And, shockingly, there is a southern state that plans the number of prison beds it needs for the future based on how many of its third grade students are not reading at a third grade level

Our Willow Lane Partnership

Our church-school partnership is with Willow Lane Elementary. At this school, located only blocks from our church, more than 60% of the students receive free or reduced school lunch. That's how we know there is a significant need. If parents cannot afford to buy lunch, they undoubtedly cannot often afford to buy the luxury of a book at a book fair.

What We Like About Read5000

On the day of the book fair, 8-10 volunteers go to Willow Lane and help the students select their books. Typically, there are about 20 students from each class who come to choose books (parents are given the choice as to whether their child will participate or not). It's an exciting and joyful day for both the volunteers and the children.

Read5000 has truly become a program, not just an extra book fair at the school. First, students learn how to greet the volunteers; they are instructed to look us in the eye and introduce themselves. The students also:

- Receive a lesson in math and budgeting. Each student is given \$10 to spend and the volunteers help them with their math as they choose their books.
- Practice their writing skills by writing thank you notes to the congregation. You may have seen some of these notes posted at our fundraisers or on bulletin boards.
- Are asked to "pay it forward". Because they have received the gift of a book, they are asked to help their family or friends with a task.

The most important thing we do for students is to connect with them. According to the school's at-risk reading coordinator, Leigh Anderson, what children in poverty need the most is to connect with another adult who cares and is excited for them to be reading.



"UP and OUT of POVERTY" Mobile Food Market at Century College

Article submitted by Joy Ballou



In December 2016 the White Bear Lake Emergency Food Shelf and Century College teamed up to provide a Mobile Food Market for the students at the college one day per month. At that time, several members of WBLUMC were active in volunteering at the Food Shelf. This volunteer opportunity came to the notice of a group in the church, Faith In Action (FIA), a small group of 7 women desiring to be more involved in community and social action through the church. They were looking for a project in which to get involved and in turn involve more church members. FIA decided to sponsor one of the Mobile Markets and donated \$400 to do so.

In keeping with our church mission statement, "Nourishing the Hungers of Life" this small group decided in January 2018 to fully take on staffing the monthly mobile food market.

Since their partnership with the College and Food Shelf, student and volunteer participation has increased tremendously: the first month of operation there were 5 volunteers, 3 from the food shelf and 2 from WBLUMC. Twenty four students received food that month.

We've grown to a volunteer list of 22, and 112 students received food in November 2019. Outreach has increased and every month now there are students who have not attended the market previously dropping by. And, because of information shared about the Food Shelf at the Mobile Market, we now have some students who are shopping at the Food Shelf in addition to the Mobile Market. They are also informed of other services that the food Shelf offers to community members. This has been a wonderful collaboration between WBLUMC, The WBL Food Shelf, and Century Market.

Until next newsletter, Merry Christmas and peace to all.

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