

Matthews Ministry Backpack Program

Matthews Ministry has a mission. They are working to eliminate childhood hunger in Brunswick County through partnerships made with individuals and entities in Brunswick County.

The efforts of the Ocean Ridge Community are helping them do just that. Old Dominion Dames, along with the Ocean Ridge Charities Association Inc (ORCA), for the past 3 years, has been collecting backpacks filled with food from community residents, and delivering them to local elementary schools to distribute to needy children.

Why? Because in Brunswick County, 27.6% of children are food insecure. This means they do not know where their next meal will come from. While they can get meals in school during the week, what happens on the weekend? This is where the backpacks come in.

This year's program collected and delivered a record high number of backpacks...138 from 90 property owners. Last year, the number was 123 and the first year of operation (2013) saw 87, making the total 348 to date! At about \$30 a backpack, this amounts to \$10,440 in donations to help Matthews Ministry do its work. These donations have helped Matthew's Ministry start up the recent school years for approximately 25% of the children they service each year. This year, the backpacks went to Town Creek Elementary and Jessie Mae Monroe Elementary schools. Thanks to all at Ocean Ridge who participated this year. Your donations are very well appreciated!

Over and above the annual Backpack Program, every month, Matthew's Ministry purchases a large food order at a reduced cost, using their account with Food Bank of Central and Eastern NC. Volunteers pick up the bulk food where it is then separated and packed into plastic bags. These plastic bags are sent to area schools each week to be placed in the backpacks of identified children. Food is sent home every Friday to help supplement the children over the weekend. In fact, Ocean Ridge's own Old Dominion Dames help them every month by picking up food at the pantry on Oak Island and delivering it to Jessie Mae Monroe Elementary school.

Children are identified for the program by a teacher, coach, guidance counselor, or social worker. Children receive a separate backpack at the beginning of each year to use to transport food.

What has Matthews Ministry been able to do towards their goal of reducing childhood hunger? Today, they provide weekend food to 500 children in 13 Brunswick County schools. They are a 100% volunteer organization with less than 1% overhead, so donations can be used to purchase food for the children. It costs \$5.50 to feed a child for a weekend, \$22 to feed a child for a month, and \$220 to feed a child for a 40 week school year. All of the food and backpacks that are used for the program are purchased with money raised from grants, food drives, community fund raisers and donations.

Just how did the program get started? In August 2010, a teacher submitted a prayer request to a local Moms' in Touch group. The prayer simply stated, "Please pray for a child in my class that does not have food at home to eat."

Kristie Disbrow, a local mom, went back to the teacher and asked if her family could donate food to help this child. She quickly learned that many other children in the school did not have food to eat at home. Kristie emailed her friends, told them about this need and set a collection bin on her front porch. Many donated food to this cause and teachers, guidance counselors and social workers distributed food to hungry children and their families. More and more schools heard about this program and in December 2010, Matthew's Ministry became a 501(c)(3) non-profit agency.

Thanks again to all our wonderfully generous Ocean Ridge Residents! You are making a difference.

Please check out our new website at www.orcharities.org, LIKE US
(Ocean Ridge Charities Association Inc.) on Facebook (www.facebook.com)
or email us at orcharities@gmail.com.



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