



HEART4SCHOOLS

NEWSLETTER



"Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past. See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the wilderness and streams in the desert." Isaiah 43:18-19

Angela McNeal

A new school year is right around the corner. During my school-aged years, I was always so excited about buying my school supplies and getting ready for that first day of school. I couldn't wait to meet my teachers and see who would be in my classes. There was such a great anticipation!

I still like the adventure of the "new" directions and opportunities that God brings to my life. However, I am also tempted to look back at what I am being asked to leave behind so that I can take these new steps. Why do I do this? Maybe I was comfortable right where I was. Maybe I felt better equipped for the old chapter. Can anyone else relate?

I am so thankful that I serve a loving, gracious Heavenly Father who brings us peace, equips us for all that He calls us to, and provides for our needs as we trust Him and follow in obedience!

As we begin a new school year, we may need to "forget the former things". There will be a 'new normal'. We are so excited about the possibility of going into the school building to volunteer and to connect with students and teachers! But will things be like they were pre-pandemic? I don't think so.

Even if policies and procedures could go back to the way they were in the fall of 2019, we as a people cannot. We are a changed people. Our students and teachers have experienced loss, illness, isolation, trials, and frustrations. Our students have fallen academically behind, and our teachers have been stretched and have worked so diligently to teach through new platforms.

As these students and teachers come back for a "new" year, after a shortened summer, they may be weary and discouraged. I look forward to the opportunity South Carolina Baptist churches will have to walk beside them, encourage them, and share God's love through our actions. In this newsletter, you will find many ways that we can serve those in our local schools. As we do, God is sure to bring life and hope, making "streams in the desert".

Check out the last page for *Serving Schools in a Post Pandemic World* training on September 9th. Seating is limited. Don't miss the early registration discount.

Heart4Schools Buckets

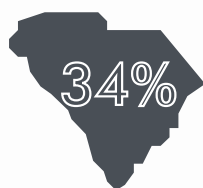


How will you serve in 2021-2022?

Several years ago, the Education Oversight Committee met with Heart4Schools to help identify the most effective ways to make an impact in our local schools. Some of the most pressing needs are student literacy, student hunger, and teacher morale.

SC Education Statistics

A student not reading on grade level by 3rd grade is **4 X** more likely to drop out of school and **8 X** more likely if they live in poverty.



34% of 4th graders in the state of SC are not reading on grade level.

Over **1 000** SC educators left the profession last year due to the pandemic.



1 in 5 children go to school hungry every day in South Carolina.

How Can we Help?

Reconnecting with the Principal

- No matter your level of involvement last year, everyone will benefit from a conversation with the principal.
- They need to hear your support and your offer to serve during the new year.
- You need the opportunity to ask "How can we help?"
- If you feel some of the needs are beyond your resources, invite another church - or two - to serve with you.
- Be sure to connect at least once a month to let them know you are thinking of them and praying for them. Continue to ask how you can help.

Reading Buddies

- Ask your principal if volunteers will be allowed in the classrooms.
- Ask if they would like to have volunteers to work with students on reading or math.
- If the answer is yes, find volunteers to commit to spending time with one student on a weekly basis throughout the year.
- Time with this student will increase their confidence, self esteem and their reading levels or math fact mastery.
- Be sure to get all background checks completed and attend volunteer trainings.
- If the school doesn't offer Reading Buddy training, contact Heart4Schools. We will be happy to offer a training for your volunteers.



Teacher Support

- Teacher support is one of easiest ways to begin serving a school.
- It gives great opportunities to build relationships.



- Begin by asking the principal if they have a vision for encouraging their teachers.
- Pray about ways to involve church members, small groups, and Sunday School classes in serving and connecting teachers.
- Write personal notes of encouragement to teachers.
- Provide meals during orientation or on work days.
- Enlist volunteers to provide "duty free" lunch for teachers. This is a favorite blessing!
- Bring a special treat to the teacher workroom once a month.
- Be sure to support all staff at the school.
- For a more complete list of ideas, visit our website: www.heart4schools.org.

Backpack Buddies

- Ask the principal if they have identified students who are food insecure. You may be directed to the guidance counselor or school social worker.
- Determine the number of students needing weekend bags of food.
- If the need is too great for your church resources, ask several other churches to participate in this ministry with you.
- Purchase the food, fill the bags and return the bags to the school.
- See the "Backpack Buddies" resource on our website for more details: www.heartschools.org.

Ministry Spotlight: Cross Roads Baptist, Easley SC

Phil Henry, Pastor

Paula Williams, Coordinator

Backpack Buddies

Cross Roads Baptist Church has been providing sacks of food for students at Dacusville Elementary and Middle School for 13 years. They usually serve about 60 students once a week, but during the pandemic the number decreased to 50.

Paula Williams, Judy Lail, and Janet Tindall work together to ensure that students do not go hungry on the weekend. While Paula's role is purchasing the food from Sam's and delivering it to the school, Judy and Janet (two sisters) work together to fill each of the bags.

The average cost of the bags is \$5 and they hold 12 items: 3 meals, 3 fruits, 2 breakfasts and 4 snacks. Items include microwavable meals like macaroni and cheese, Ramen noodles, Spaghetti O's and Beanie Weenies, canned fruit, apple sauce, pudding, oatmeal, grits, Pop-tarts, Lance crackers, granola bars or a fruit bar. Everything fits into a gallon size Ziplock bag.

This ministry has been embraced by the community. There are three churches from different denominations who faithfully give financially to Cross Roads Baptist to ensure that food can be purchased: Nine Forks Baptist WMU, Dacusville United Methodist Ladies Group, and Easley Presbyterian Ladies Group. The Community Thanksgiving Service offering has also been designated for Backpack Buddy food purchases for several years. When I asked Paula why she gives so much of her time and energy to this ministry, she explained that she previously worked at the middle school. "You know there is a need, so you try to fill the need."

The guidance counselor and social worker have expressed a new need in recent months. They have asked the church to provide food and hygiene items for families in need during the summer. They have identified 11 families and each will receive a box of food, filled depending on the size of the family, as well as some hygiene items that cannot be purchased with an EBT card. The work done through Cross Roads Baptist is a beautiful picture of three individuals, a school counselor and social worker, four churches, and a community coming together to bring hope and ensure that no one goes hungry!

Be sure to check out the Heart4Schools website to learn more about providing food for hungry students: www.heart4schools.org.



Filled bags for delivery



Beginning to stock the shelves for summer food ministry



Ministry Spotlight: Harmony Baptist Church

Patrick Roddey, Lead Pastor
T J Austin, Associate Pastor
Ben Winn, Associate Pastor

Harmony Baptist Church had about 80 members of their congregation involved in providing teacher support during Teacher Appreciation Week this year. Patrick, TJ, and Ben strive to have a consistent presence in their school and community, and they do this by talking with principals about needs, and then placing the needs in front of their congregation. Recently, they wanted to have a personal touch that let their community's teachers know they were loved and appreciated during Teacher Appreciation Week. They met with principals at Lewisville Elementary, Middle and High School. The principals shared the names of their entire faculty and these 163 names were then placed on a bulletin board for church members to see. They were encouraged to take a name(s) and write a special card or letter of appreciation. When all the notes had been written and turned in, they were separated by schools and delivered to some happy recipients! Many of the staff personally knew the student or family writing the note. On Thursday, parents and students lined up on each side of the three school driveways at 7 am and held up signs and cheered for the teachers and staff as they came to work. They also provided meals for staff at each of the schools. There was no doubt that Harmony Baptist loves Lewisville schools!!

Throughout the year (when not in a pandemic), church members also provide snacks for the weekly staff meetings at each of the three schools. Because all the staff meetings take place at the same time, it takes a crew of volunteers to make this happen. Parents of students in each of the prospective schools are asked to provide the snacks on a rotational basis. In this way, many in the church are engaged in serving teachers and letting them know that Harmony Baptist loves and supports them!

Teacher Support



Sports Camp

Since 2014, Harmony Baptist has been hosting the Winning Well Sports Camp for their community. This sports camp was birthed as leaders sought a way to engage more students and to get them involved in Vacation Bible School. They knew there were a lot of athletically minded people in the community, so they considered a sports themed VBS. This soon developed into a camp that teaches sports skills and God's Word to students entering kindergarten through 6th grade. In 2019, they had 220 kids attending with 70% of these coming from the community, not their church.

Lewisville Middle and High School coaches work with church volunteers to teach skills and drills in 7 areas: cheerleading, volleyball, softball, baseball, football, soccer, and basketball. The coaches are training students who will one day play on their teams, and the students love the opportunity to work with the coaches. Over 140 church members volunteer throughout the week to help with first aid, meals, coaching, and Bible lessons. Students learn a Bible verse that supports the theme of the week as well as daily memory verses. After sports drills, students are brought into huddles of 5-7 to hear the Bible story and to have intentional conversations about God and what it means to have a relationship with Him. The camp is held at the high school, but on the last night, students and volunteers pack into the church sanctuary to worship and to review what they have learned. This is followed by a fun Water Rally with inflatables and the local Fire Department helping with slip and slides.

While the sports camp had to be cancelled last summer due to Covid restrictions, Harmony Baptist is very excited to be hosting the sports camp again this year! If you are interested in learning more about engaging your community through a similar camp and creating a "relational discipleship atmosphere" in your own church, TJ Austin would be happy to talk with you!



Ministry Spotlight

Reading Buddies



While Covid restrictions kept our volunteers out of the schools last year, districts are hopeful they will be lifted and Reading Buddies will be allowed to come and work with students again. Volunteers may read with a student, practice math facts, or help an ESL student with homework. Teachers will know the needs of their students.

After a year of virtual learning, an EOC report stated that "On average, 7 out of 10 South Carolina students in grades 2 through 8 are projected not to meet grade level proficiency standards in mathematics and English Language Arts in spring 2021." Before the pandemic, 1/3 of fourth graders were not reading on grade level. We have great opportunities to make a difference in these young lives. As volunteers spend thirty minutes with a student throughout the year, their self-esteem and their reading levels increase. Their futures are also impacted as they are more likely to stay in school and graduate.

Contact your principal today to see if volunteer restrictions are being lifted in your district. Ask how you can help.

For more information on Reading Buddies, go to the Heart4Schools website: www.heart4schools.org.

If you and your volunteers need training, let us know. We will be happy to arrange it. Contact Angela McNeal at angelamcneal@scbaptist.org.

Serving Schools in a Post Pandemic World

September 9, 2021

Shandon Baptist Church, Columbia SC

9:30 am - 3:30 pm

Guest Speaker/Facilitator: Reggie McNeal



Are you....

- Beginning an intentional school partnership?
- Starting over after time away because of the pandemic?
- Wanting to refocus, recharge and learn from other church experiences?

This training is for anyone with a church/school partnership - even if you have attended a training in the past!

Cost: \$199 per church with up to 3 attendees

Early Registration Cost: \$149 by July 23rd

Attendees will receive several books, a Heart4Schools t-shirt, access to monthly training Zoom calls, and an invitation to our Heart4Schools Spring Celebration Event (only for fall training attendees).

Lunch will be provided.

We are excited to have Dr. Reggie McNeal as our guest speaker and facilitator.

Reggie enjoys helping people, leaders, and Christian organizations determine and experience epic wins with Kingdom impact. He currently serves as City Coach for GoodCities of Minneapolis MN.

As City Coach, Reggie works with community leaders around the country to build cross-domain collaborative efforts that can move the needle on big societal issues. Reggie is the author of nine books including Kingdom Collaborators: 8 Signature Themes of Leaders Who Turn the World Upside Down (IVP, 2018), which details the character and competencies of effective kingdom leaders.

You can hear more from Reggie on The Reggie McNeal Podcast: Kingdom Come.

Registration is limited to 120 and closes on August 19th.

REGISTER HERE TODAY:
www.heart4schools.org