



HEART4SCHOOLS

NEWSLETTER



Angela McNeal

Over the last few weeks, I have heard school reports from clinical practitioners, the Senior Education Advisor to the Governor, district leaders, and a few superintendents. The picture they have painted of the needs and challenges faced by our students is overwhelming.

- Academically, national test scores released September 1 show an average decline of 5 points in reading and 7 points in math for 9-year-old students compared to 2020, before the pandemic. Declines are across all races and income levels.
- We are experiencing a mental health crisis among our children, teens, and teachers. (See page 2 for more details.)
- Student disengagement and absenteeism is at an all time high, with 45% of public schools reporting student chronic absenteeism has "increased a lot" from before the pandemic, and 17% reported an increase over the 2020-21 school year.
- 14% of children in SC (160,000) live in households that were food insecure at some point during the year, down from 28% in 2011. During the pandemic, all children ate free at schools. This year, this program was not extended. We will see these numbers rise!
- Since September 2020, South Carolina schools have seen 14,534 teachers retire or leave the profession.

As I type this, I am reminded that nothing takes God by surprise! How incredible that we have over 380 churches already investing in serving over 460 schools across the state! Now that doors are open to volunteers again, we have incredible opportunities to provide support and encouragement to students and teachers in the days ahead.

As you pray for schools, serve as Reading Buddies or mentors, provide food, school supplies, or hygiene items for students, and as you encourage teachers, you are making a difference! Check out the following pages to learn more about serving in a post-pandemic world.

Looking Ahead

OCTOBER
National Principal Month

OCTOBER 2
School Custodian Appreciation Day

OCTOBER 27
World Occupational Therapy Day

NOVEMBER 7
Savannah River Baptist Association
Heart4Schools Conversation
10:00 am - 1:00 pm

NOVEMBER 7 - 11
National School Psychology Week

NOVEMBER 11
Veteran's Day At School

NOVEMBER 14
Outside the Walls Conference
10 - 3 PM
New Heights Baptist Church
Columbia, SC

NOVEMBER 14-15
SCBC Annual Meeting
Riverland Hills Baptist Church
Columbia, SC

FOR OTHER SPECIAL SCHOOL
CELEBRATION DATES SEE PAGE 7

Heart4Schools Training Recap

Better Together

Guest speakers shared many needs with us, but several stood out and deserve our attention:

MENTAL HEALTH

- 1 in 5 children and adolescents experience a mental health problem during their school years.
- From March 2020 to October 2020, mental health-related ER visits increased 24% for children ages 5 to 11 and 31% for those ages 12 to 17 compared to 2019 (CDC).
- February and March of 2021, ER visits for suspected suicide attempts were 51% higher among girls between the ages of 12 and 17 than during the same period in 2019.

What can we do?

- Be aware of needs of children and adolescents in our congregations. Provide mental health resources for students and families.
- Consider mentoring a student in elementary, middle or high school.
- Pray for wisdom and insight for teachers, administrators, counselors, and social workers. Provide support and encouragement for them as they work with students on a daily basis.

TEACHER RETENTION

- 55% of teachers are leaving by the 5th year (up 37% in last 2 years).
- College students are not choosing an education degree.

How can we help?

- Serve as a substitute teacher.
- Provide support to teachers by volunteering in classrooms, helping with carline, making copies, giving them a "duty free" lunch.
- Give special encouragement to new teachers. Do they need items for their classroom? Consistently check in on them.



HOMELESSNESS

- In ONE district last year, there were 463 homeless students. This year over 100 have already been identified in the first month of school.
- Increasing rates of homelessness are due to inflation and low housing availability.

What can we do?

- Talk with your social workers/McKinney Vento Liaison.
- Help social workers with hotel costs to keep families off the street.
- Provide gift cards for social workers to help with food and gas costs for families.
- Give school supplies, headphones, flash drives, calculators, uniforms and hygiene items.
- Purchase or collect food for school food pantries.



Heart4Schools Training Recap

Better Together



LOW READING AND MATH SCORES

- Only 48% of SC students are reading on grade level.
- 29% of 3rd graders are 2 grade levels behind in reading.
- Only 30% of students are on grade level in math.
- 41% of 8th graders are 2 grade levels behind in math.

What can we do?

- Serve as a Reading Buddy. Volunteer as a math tutor. Our elementary students are behind and could use help with basic math facts.
- Provide after-school tutoring.

SCHOOL READINESS

- Only 36% of SC children were "ready" for kindergarten in fall 2021.

What can we do?

- Work with the SC Family and Community Engagement Center to help provide resources for your community.
- Since 61% of low-income families have no books in their homes, host a book drive for your local school.
- Help with the Book Fair and ensure that every child has an opportunity to purchase a book.

ATTENDANCE

- Schools are struggling with chronic absenteeism.
- In one district, 1 in 5 kids missed more than 18 days.

What can we do?

- Encourage children in our circles to attend class.
- Work with principals to provide incentives for those who have perfect attendance or only miss a few days. Consider providing a cookout or pizza party at the end of each the semester - or have smaller prizes each month.

INTERNATIONAL TEACHERS

- The need for international teachers is increasing greatly.
- We had over 1200 teachers last year. This year, one district tripled their numbers.
- Teachers come with 2 suitcases and very little support.

What can we do?

- Work with school districts to develop a way to welcome teachers. Several churches are providing welcome baskets with household essentials.
- Help furnish apartments so they are not sleeping on air mattresses for 3 years.
- Provide fellowship opportunities.
- Be a friend. Help them get acclimated to a new city/country. Invite them to fellowship with your family.



THE BEST THING WE CAN DO
IS ASK, "HOW CAN WE HELP?"

Serving Our Teachers



- Pray for administrators, teachers, staff, bus drivers, students, families.
- Provide snacks for the teacher lounge or for monthly afterschool in-service meetings.
- Write personal notes of encouragement.
- Adopt a Teacher for the year.
- Volunteer in classrooms. Read to a class. Help with bulletin boards, making copies, crafts, or cutting...
- Give teachers a "duty free" lunch.
- Talk with administrators about helping in carline.
- Provide breakfast or lunch for special occasions.
- Surprise teachers with a special treat in their box.
- Greet teachers with a coffee bar once a month or have a coffee truck visit their school.
- Take time to get to know your teachers.



Ministry Spotlight: River Springs Church, Irmo SC

Rev. Nathan Stam, Pastor

Mrs. Terry Adkins, Heart4Schools Coordinator



River Springs Church is doing an incredible job serving four schools in their community. This congregation of about 120 in weekly attendance has 20 volunteers who give their time to help serve students and teachers. They began providing weekend food for students through their "snackpack" program twelve years ago. Prior to the pandemic, they were serving 60 students in three schools once a week. Federal funding reduced those numbers during the pandemic, so they are now serving 28 students a week, but they see those numbers rising. All students receiving weekend food have been identified as transitionally homeless, whether they are "couch hopping" or living in a hotel. These meals are a lifeline to these students and families.

After learning more about Heart4Schools, Terry Adkins has worked to create a true partnership with two of their local schools. They have written notes of encouragement to teachers and provided coffee and donuts at the end of the school year (for administrative staff, teachers, bus drivers, cafeteria staff, and SRO officers). This event led to an opportunity to pray with a few staff members. They began this year by supporting teachers with a school supply drive and a Chick-fil-A luncheon. They have also collected belts for one of their schools that requires school uniforms.



Church members are really excited to have the opportunity to "Adopt-A-Teacher". When Terry asked administrators if they had teachers who would be interested in participating, 42 responded positively. Church members are committed to staying connected with their teacher throughout the year through emails, cards of encouragement, giving a special gift or gift bag on special occasions - or "just because", dropping off a sweet treat, and creatively celebrating birthdays. They will also offer to help in their classroom or do offsite classroom work and help with classroom wish lists. Volunteers are already building relationships with just a few weeks of connecting!



Ministry Spotlight: New Salem Baptist Church Sumter, SC

Rev. Kevin Massey, Pastor

When you talk with Kevin Massey, pastor of New Salem Baptist Church in Sumter, SC, it is obvious that he and his church are passionate about expanding the kingdom and impacting their local community. One way they have done this is through a partnership with Cherryvale Elementary School. Five years ago, they chose to partner with this school even though it was not the closest to them in proximity. Cherryvale had scored in the bottom 25% of the state report card for reading and most of the students were in low income and single parent homes. Kevin had recently heard the correctional system uses the number of illiterate third graders to forecast inmate populations. He says, "I knew that our church, even as small as it is, could make a difference."

Since Covid, New Salem has averaged around 35 in worship on Sunday with 69% of those attending over the age of 65. This has not stopped them from making a great impact! Church members were excited to serve. "Our seniors were making a difference in the lives of these children, and they felt alive and excited to go each week and spend time with their buddies." Volunteers took prizes for reading and would often bring a Happy Meal when students reached a preset goal. The congregation was shocked to discover that many of the children had never had a Happy Meal before.

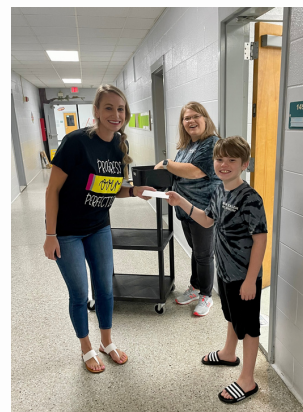
During the second year of partnership, the church learned that many students struggled because they lost ground over the summer with no books to read at home. Since they were a smaller congregation, they had to be creative in how they would address this need. Church members were asked to give \$1 each Sunday. After collecting money for months and working with the reading interventionist to get a discount through Scholastic books, they were able to send every student home with three books! "This was an amazing feat that God did!"

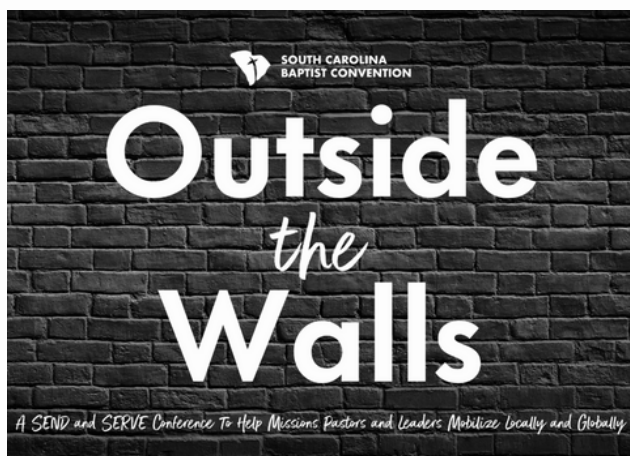
The next year, they expanded their partnership by providing support and encouragement to teachers. "We worked hard and shopped very frugally and made welcome back "Survival Kits" for all the teachers. We purchased small compartment storage containers at a local store and filled them with items they would need like aspirin, hand gel, gum, Band-Aids, and of course chocolate."

They personally passed out the kits and began a relationship with the teachers. They also continued to serve as Reading Buddies with 60% of their congregation participating in this ministry!

While Covid restrictions kept volunteers out of the schools the last two years, New Salem continued to love on teachers. They provided a box lunch for teachers and had Kona Ice come by for an afternoon treat. "We would have never been able to accomplish this without the Serve/Heart4Schools Grant from the SCBC. We then followed up with notes and little treats throughout the year in teachers' boxes. The continual connection resulted in an incredible relationship with the principal." At the end of the school year, she contacted the church to ask them to do something to bless and encourage her staff. As a result, they were able to serve breakfast and pray with any teachers who desired prayer.

Pastor Kevin sees the partnership with Cherryvale Elementary as an invaluable relationship. "It has helped the New Salem family put feet to the concept of being the church. It also has given them a place to serve and live out their faith outside the walls of the church.... We acknowledge that we are a very small church that has limited resources. Nevertheless, we do not let that reality define us. We have embraced the truth that we are to be seeking ways to expand the Kingdom and impact our community. Our goal is to continue to find creative ways to touch the lives of our neighbors so that they can see the Gospel in action."





A SEND and SERVE Conference for Missions Pastors and Leaders

Join us Monday, November 14, 2022

10 AM - 3 PM

Check-in begins at 9 AM

New Heights Church

5501 Broad River Road, Columbia, SC

Lunch is included!

Registration: <https://www.scbaptist.org/serve>

Join us as we spend a day discovering ways to meaningfully serve and engage our communities and beyond with the hope of the gospel.

Will Browning, NAMB Church Planting Strategist, will be the main speaker. There will also be breakout sessions to train on various topics related to serving in your community and around the world.

Heart4Schools Breakout Session: Come hear Ginger Duncan, Director of United International Ministries, as she explains the needs of international teachers, how to help them in their transition to the United States, ways to build relationships and share the gospel.

Food Insecurity and Backpack Buddies

JoAnn Johnson, Faith Based Giving Manager for Harvest Hope Food Bank, has a passion for ensuring that no child goes hungry in South Carolina. She recently shared the following information:



Did you know that 1 in 7 children face hunger in South Carolina? Children facing hunger are more likely to struggle in school and beyond. They might: repeat a grade in elementary school; experience developmental impairments in areas like language and motor skills; or have more social and behavioral problems.

15% of children in South Carolina struggle with food insecurity.

- 16% in the Midlands
- 18% in the Upstate
- 21% of children in the Pee Dee
- 48.3% of households receiving SNAP benefits have children.

This school year Harvest Hope will partner with schools to help provide students with over 440,000 backpacks of meals through our Backpack program. That equates to:

- Over 10,600 students in the Midlands
- Over 2,900 students in the Upstate
- Over 270 students in the Pee Dee

My name is JoAnn Johnson and I am the Faith Based Giving Manager for Harvest Hope Food Bank. One of the things that I have been tasked with is uncovering children within our 20 county service area who are not currently receiving Backpacks from any source on the weekends. I have learned that at this time, more than 5,000 children within our 20 county service area are not receiving Backpacks.

The Lord has given me a passion for this and as a result I remain committed to stamping this problem out. To do this, I will need your help. Our Backpack program is primarily funded by Faith Based organizations and together I am convinced that we can not only meet, but exceed our goals in getting hungry children fed. Please contact me if you would like to learn more and/or would like to partner with Harvest Hope in helping to feed the food insecure. JJohnson@harvesthope.org 864.293.5638

Many of our South Carolina churches are feeding students through the Backpack Buddy program. Some churches do food drives. Some purchase all food from stores, while others purchase directly from their local food bank. There are many benefits to purchasing through a food bank since they can purchase food much cheaper. Harvest Hope provides bags for \$6 a piece (or \$240 per child for a year.) While some churches choose to have the food bank package and deliver the food, others choose to have the food delivered to the church so that they can do the packing. Others go to the food bank for a monthly packing event. Consider working with other churches to meet needs in your community!

2022-2023 School Appreciation Days

September 5-9 National Substitute Appreciation Week

September 8 World Physical Therapy Day

October National Principal Month

October 2 School Custodian Appreciation Day

October 6 National Coach Day

October 27 World Occupational Therapy Day

November 7-11 National School Psychology Week

November 16 National Education Support Professionals Day

November 17-21 School Bus Driver Appreciation Week

November 11 Veteran's Day at School

January School Board Appreciation Month

January 9 School Resource Officer Appreciation Day

February 6-10 National School Counseling Week

March 4 Maintenance Worker Appreciation Week

March 5-11 National School Social Worker Week

April 4 School Librarian Appreciation Day

April 3- 7 National Assistant Principal Week

April 5 Paraprofessional Appreciation Day

April 25 School Bus Driver Appreciation Day

April 17-21 National Volunteer Recognition Week

April 26 National Administrative Professionals Day

May 1 School Principals Day

May 1-5 Teacher Appreciation Week

May 5 School Lunch Hero Day

May 10 School Nurse Day

May 18 National Speech Language Pathologist Day

