



HEART4SCHOOLS

NEWSLETTER



Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation.... Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, to be reconciled to God. (2 Corinthians 5: 17-18, 20)

Angela McNeal

As we celebrated Christmas with our families this year, we pondered the gift of life that came to us in the form of a little baby. We have a Savior who humbled himself, left the splendor of heaven, experienced the results of the fallenness of humanity, suffered, and died for us. He loved, lived, and died to pay the debt that we could not pay so that we could live in fellowship with him today – and in eternity with him at our appointed time.

When we embrace this truth and put Jesus at the center of our lives, we become a new creation. As we begin a new year (WOW, 2023!) how are our lives reflecting fellowship with our Savior? Paul tells us that we are to be ambassadors for Christ. This really resonates with me as I think about the many pastors, leaders, and volunteers around our state who are serving in our local schools. What a wonderful opportunity to be “an ambassador of the King”! Paul David Tripp says this means “reflecting his message, his methods, and his character wherever he has placed us.” (New Morning Mercies, December 14)

As we think about our partnerships and our purpose in life this January, let us consider how we might represent our Savior King in practical ways. There is a hopelessness in our society – in our communities – in our schools. We are seeing a desperation for hope. We know that hope has a name... and His name is Jesus! What a privilege it is to be His ambassador!

Looking Ahead

January - School Board Appreciation Month

January 9 - School Resource Officer Appreciation Day

January 12 - "Serving Students" Heart4Schools Zoom Call

February 6-10 - National School Counseling Week

February 22 - IMPACT Networking BBQ - 6-8 pm

February 23 - IMPACT - 9 - 4pm Church at the Mill, Spartanburg, SC

March 4 - Maintenance Worker Appreciation Week

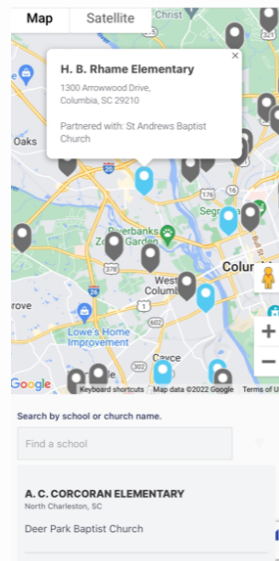
March 5-11 - National School Social Work Week

Heart4Schools Interactive Map



Check out the church/school partnership interactive map at www.heart4schools.org. Click on "Find a School" and type in your school district or school name to see which schools have a partnership. Search by your church name and let us know if there have been any changes in your partnerships.

Our desire is to connect every school in SC with a church that loves and serves them well.



We presently have 483 schools with partnerships and 729 to go! Let pastors in your community know of the opportunities we have to be the hands and feet of Jesus in our local schools.

Blue pins represent schools with a partner. Gray pins represent schools without a partner.

Closed Doors



Sometimes it seems like the doors to school ministry are closed. You have made call after call. There can be many reasons for an administrator's slow response. The number one reason is that they are very busy! They may also be unsure of your motives or not understand that you don't want something from them - you want to help. They may need time to think about the best way your church can help and/or need time to work on the logistics of bringing volunteers into the school to serve.

What can you do? Pray for the administrator. Be patient. Don't give up. One of our administrators suggested dropping off a personal note asking, "How can I help?" along with a box of donuts, flowers, or a small treat. We have seen this work!

Remember that it takes time to build trust. As we begin our partnerships may we under promise and over deliver. Let's be faithful in what is asked and continue to show up consistently (how about weekly) to ask how you can pray for them - and how you can help.

Find ways to be present in the schools and get to know the administration, teachers, staff, and students. As they experience your love for them, doors for ministry will open throughout the year.

“The best thing we can do is ask, “How can we help?””



Reading Buddies

Most schools have opened their doors for volunteers to return. South Carolina Baptist church members around the state are reading with students for 30 minutes a week. They are connecting with the student, supporting and encouraging their reading, and letting them know that they are cared for and special! Do you have Reading Buddies at your local elementary school?

What is Your "Why"?

In ten gospel passages, we read of Jesus' compassion. Mark 6:34 says, "When he went ashore he saw a great crowd, and he had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd". Chuck Bomar, author of [Serving Local Schools: Bring Christ's Compassion to the Core of Your Community](#), says as image bearers of Jesus, we are to reflect His compassion and love. We intentionally love others because He first loved us.

Unfortunately, we have a tendency to only see the needs right around us. When we go to our local schools, however, we see a "world of diversity right within their walls because the schools draw from multiple neighborhoods" (page 24). Schools are a hub in our communities where all neighborhoods, cultures, and differing socio-economic groups come together. We see:

- Children in foster care
- Homeless students and families
- Families living in poverty
- Students struggling academically and/or socially
- Children and teenagers with parents who are physically or emotionally absent
- Teachers and staff who are burdened with the needs in front of them

As we talk with administrators, we can learn what they identify as the most pressing needs in the school. By listening, responding, and serving consistently, we show that we really care! In the process, we build trust and create relationships with administrators, faculty, and staff.

“ There is a world of diversity right within their walls because the schools draw from multiple neighborhoods. ”

As a result, often staff will reach out to pastors, leaders, and volunteers to share their struggles and ask for prayer. Pastors become the unofficial "chaplains" of the school when they have been consistently present and shown compassion throughout the year. They are called on when a student is struggling, someone in the school is seriously ill, when there is an unexpected death, a house fire, or a tragic suicide. Because of the trust that has been built, pastors are able to be "ambassadors for Christ" and share hope during these difficult times. Our communities also begin to see our churches as loving, giving, and supportive. This opens many doors for ministry and life transformation.

Let's start 2023 by connecting with our principals and asking, "How can I help?"



Ministry Spotlight: Lucas Avenue Baptist Church Laurens, SC

Rev. Michael Post, Pastor

Patsy Taylor, Heart4Schools Coordinator

Although Lucas Avenue Baptist Church has provided Good News Clubs for eight years at Ford Elementary, they really believe their true partnership with the school began last year when they began serving as Reading Buddies. Patsy Taylor attended the 2021 Heart4Schools Training with her pastor Michael Post. She heard about the opportunity to make a difference in the lives of students — and teachers — through the Reading Buddy program and approached the school in September of 2021. In March of 2022, ten volunteers began serving ten students.

It took time to establish this new program at the school, and finding volunteers proved to be difficult. Patsy's message to each of us is, "Don't give up. Stay in there because if it is God's plan, the doors will open." Before a church service one Sunday morning, she decided to give this ministry to God and asked Him to provide the volunteers. After the service, two people approached her to say they wanted to serve! Some of their church members have also recruited their friends to help. Patsy's husband, Chip wanted to be involved from the beginning. Patsy says the students are craving male attention and love "Mr. Chip". She encourages other churches to be sure to recruit male volunteers.



In the few months the volunteers were in the school last spring, they made a great impact! They provided several duty-free lunches for the teachers as well as hosted breakfast several times in the breakroom with coffee and homemade breads: banana, pumpkin, and apple cinnamon. Each time, they served the teachers and spent time developing relationships and learning more about the teachers — and better understanding their needs. One of the teachers told them, "The whole spirit of the school has changed since you've been coming." Patsy says the school began to "see us as a church that cared."

Volunteers helped with the school's book fair and realized that most of the children did not have enough money to purchase books. They decided to host their own fair at the end of the year. They collected 800 books for 413 students. Books were organized in the cafeteria and each student was able to choose two books to take home for the summer.

At the end of the school year, one of the teachers said, "You have accomplished so much in a short time. I can't wait to see what happens next year!" This year, they are continuing to serve and encourage teachers, and they have 12 volunteers serving 23 students! Patsy says, "I just get excited! I believe this is our mission, what God wants us to do!"

Ministry Spotlight: Riverbluff Church Charleston, SC

by Michell Witman,
Director of RiverKidz Childrens' Ministry

Be a Teacher's P.E.T.!

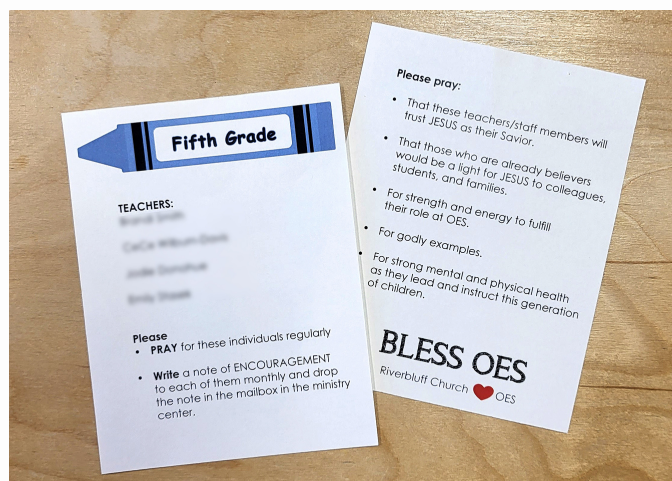
Are you looking for a great way to connect your church family with your school partner? Invite them to become a "Teacher's P.E.T.!"

Riverbluff Church encourages our members to get involved in our school partnership with Oakbrook Elementary in a variety of ways. Many cannot participate in Reading Buddies or other activities, but everyone can be a Teacher's P.E.T.!

A Teacher's P.E.T. commits to do 3 things for a teacher or staff member at their school:

- **P**RAY regularly for that person.
- **E**NCOURAGE them with at least one monthly note or card of encouragement.
- **T**REAT them once a month. Treats might include a piece of candy, a fun pack of post-it notes, a colored pen, a bookmark, or other small token attached to the encouragement card.

Begin by asking for a list of everyone who works at your school. If your school has a large faculty and staff, you might consider organizing them into groups (Administration, 5th grade teachers, etc.) to make it easier for your church (and for you) to manage.



We provide cards for each group with the names of the teachers or staff members and several prayer points. Teacher's P.E.T.'s take a card to help them remember to pray and write their notes. Church members bring their notes and treats to the church on the last Sunday of each month and place them in the "Bless OES" mailbox for me to deliver to the school on Monday.

We have seen small groups, ministry groups, Bible Study classes, and individuals commit to different groups of faculty and staff. Not only is every faculty and staff member of our school being covered in prayer, but our church family is also growing closer as they pray and serve our wonderful school partners together.

Many of the folks at Oakbrook Elementary have stopped me in the hall of the school to tell me how they have taped their encouragement notes on their computers or desks so that they can look at them whenever they are feeling overwhelmed or are having a bad day. Many of our school partners have formed friendships with their prayer partners (Teacher's P.E.T.s) and reach out to them when they need personal prayer or to ask for prayer for specific students and families. I take every opportunity to remind them that we care about them and that they are being prayed for. It has been a fun and easy way to be a huge blessing to our school partners in JESUS' Name!

6,000+ Hungry Students

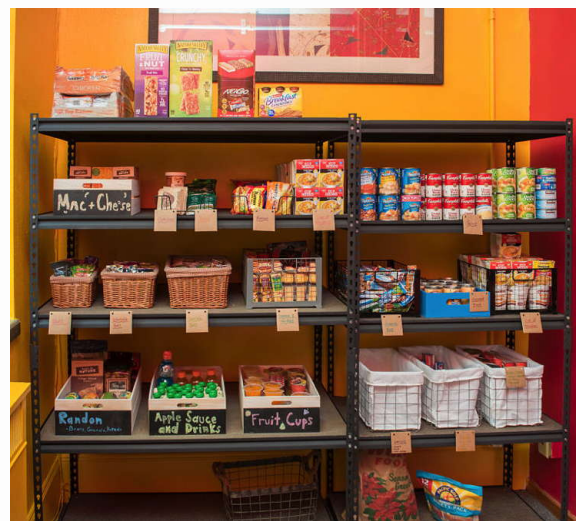
Do you have students attending your local schools who go hungry in the evenings and on the weekends? The answer is probably a resounding, "YES"! JoAnn Johnson, Faith-Based Giving Manager at Harvest Hope Food Bank recently reported a total of 6,000 students in the 20 counties served by Harvest Hope who still need backpacks of food for the weekend. This doesn't reflect the remaining 26 counties in South Carolina.

With rising inflation, we are hearing of families who are living in desperation. They don't know how they will take care of their families. Rising costs are making it impossible to pay for basic household expenses.

Consider talking with your guidance counselor and/or social worker and ask if they have students they are worried about. Ask how you can help. This may mean creating and stocking a food pantry for the school, providing boxes of food for families, or giving weekly bags of food for students to take home on the weekend.

District social workers have expressed a need for gas gift cards (so parents can get to work) or grocery gift cards. These social workers often give out of their own pockets to provide for their students.

Check out the Backpack Buddy resource on our website for more information: www.heart4schools.org.



You are Invited: Serving Students Zoom Conversation

Join us for a Zoom Call Training/Conversation on January 12 at 10 am. JoAnn Johnson, Faith-Based Giving Manager at Harvest Hope Food Bank, will update us on student hunger needs, how we can respond, and resources of the food bank.

Shana Sands, Ministry Coordinator and Women's Ministry leader at Kingdom Life Church in Simpsonville, will share creative ways of meeting the needs of students of all ages.

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://scbaptist.zoom.us/j/86374140148?pwd=b0ZvemtPWfDpMU5xbk9oK2VYcDU3UT09>

Meeting ID: 863 7414 0148

Passcode: 639646



Join the Heart4Schools Facebook Group

Want to join a network of South Carolina Baptist churches serving their local schools on Facebook?

Use this link:

www.facebook.com/groups/668426640367123/

or go to our website to join:
www.heart4schools.org.



You will find churches sharing creative ways of serving and ministering to local schools, statewide training updates and opportunities, and more! We currently have 234 members. With over 397 churches serving their schools - with multiple volunteers - we could really grow this group to be a great encouragement around the state. Check it out and join today!

Resources for 2023

Looking for some inspiration for your ministry in the community and local schools? Here are some great "reads":

The Mission Minded Guide to Church and School Partnerships by Jake McGlothlin

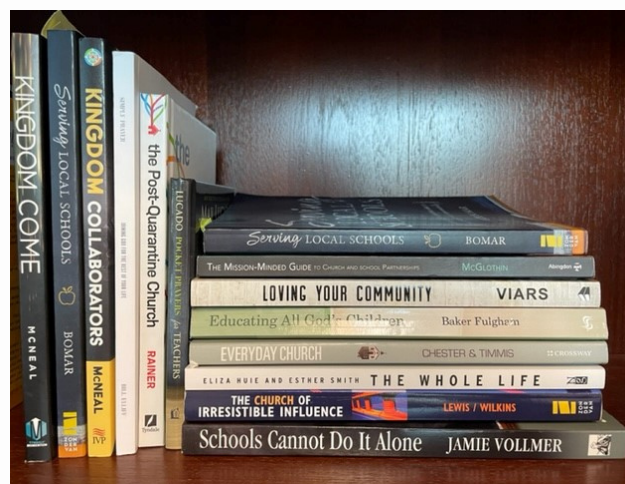
Serving Local Schools: Bring Christ's Compassion to the Core of Your Community by Chuck Bomar

Loving Your Community by Stephen Viars

Educating All God's Children by Baker Fulgham

Everyday Church by Tim Chester & Steve Timms

Schools Cannot Do It Alone by Jamie Vollmer



As ministers, we need to take care of ourselves and help others in our lives do the same.

The Whole Life, 52 Weeks of Biblical Self-Care by Eliza and Huie and Esther Smith is a great resource!



IMPACT 2023

GRIT

ENDURE | FOCUS | FINISH

February 22-23, 2023
Church at The Mill - Moore, SC
scbaptist.org/impact



Aaron Williams
Worship Leader,
The Worship Initiative



Michael Catt
Executive Producer,
Sherwood Picture Films



Jeff Struecker
Assistant Professor,
Southeastern Seminary
Army Ranger, Black Hawk Down

IMPACT is one day dedicated to creating a vibrant environment for networking and resourcing with nearly 1,000 like-minded pastors, church planters, staff and church leaders.

Don't miss the Wednesday Night Pre-Game! Join us from 6-8 pm to network with other church staff with BBQ and have the opportunity to get a glance of the ministries at Church at the Mill.

\$10 add-on for Pre-Game that you can select in registration.

www.scbaptist.org/impact

If you would like to talk about partnership opportunities or challenges, connect with others in your community serving local schools, or provide training for your volunteers, contact angelamcneal@scbaptist.org or call 803-227-6079.

Check out Heart4Schools resources at
www.heart4schools.org.

