Share the Plate for May and June, 2023

The Share the Plate recipient for May is Jonnycake Center for Hope, which is located just across the street from UUCSC's front door at 22 Kersey Road. Their thrift store at the Peace Dale rotary closed in October 2022. Seven years earlier when Kate Brewster, executive director, started at the Jonnycake Center, the store made up 25 percent of its revenue. In 2022 it dropped to seven percent. With the drop in revenue as well as changing times, it was decided to transform the retail space into a youth center. Jonnycake noticed that the under-privileged youth in the community need a central place to go after school, during summers and vacations, where they can hang out, learn skills, and socialize with other teens.

When Share the Plate committee read about the plans to create a youth center for children in our immediate area, we were anxious to help Johnnycake Center of Hope. The money we raise through Share the Plate will go toward the building renovations. After speaking to Kate Brewster we learned what a daunting task is in front of them. First, the use of the building has to be changed to "assembly", which means they have to put in a sprinkler system which is costly. They estimate they will need between $500K and $600K for the entire project. Johnnycake has already been given some grants, but as Kate Brewster said, "Every dollar helps." They anticipate having bids by mid-June, and work to start in the fall of 2023.

While all of this is happening, Jonnycake is still keeping many children engaged. For instance, they have a program called "Apple Seeds" which is an after school academic enrichment program for 1st and 2nd graders from Peace Dale Elementary School. The students are referred by administrators and teachers to strengthen their math, ELA, and socio-emotional health skills. There is also a paid internship program for eight high school students. They work in the food pantry, after school programs, and South County hospital. Jonnycake provides the students with field trips, guest speakers, and workforce skill development. Another program, called Summer Skills and Thrills, enrolls 15 to 20 youth, and provides them with opportunities to enjoy new experiences, perform community service, and engage in other activities this summer for six weeks. One other summer program is summer camp, both day and overnight camp for as many as 90 children. They will attend one of several local day camps, and some will attend overnight camp at South Kingstown's Camp Fuller.