

## WHILE TEACHERS STRIKE STUDENTS WORK TO PAY IT FORWARD



Putnam County kids in need of supplemental weekend food benefitted from the efforts of a local church and their own classmates, who even worked through the teachers' strike. On Tuesday, March 13, a two-week food drive at George Washington Elementary School culminated with a food weigh-in, overseen by nutritionist Katherine

Clark, to determine which classroom brought in the most food. Last year, students collected 4,119 food items, weighing nearly 1,000 pounds.

Back in 2011, Eleanor Presbyterian Church started a weekend Snack-Bag program, which now serves 40 children in need at the school. Seeing the efforts of the church inspired the children, who came up with the idea to start a food drive to supplement the church's program.

Debbie Yeager, the pastor's wife, is grateful for the school's desire to "pay it forward." She said, "It's sad to think that hunger is still an issue in America. We use several methods to raise the \$3,500 needed for the program. We have received funding from Wal-Mart, donations from GWE PTO, the Presbytery of WV, our own members, and even fresh apples from Gritt's Greenhouse for the last several years, but the need continues to grow. This food drive will help us meet this need, and the wonderful part is that the kids are helping other kids."

Melanie Rumer, the school's counselor, keeps the church's team informed as to how many food bags are needed per week. The typical Snack-Bag includes nutritional items to provide two breakfasts, lunches and dinners as well as snacks. Items can include cereal, fruit, cheese crackers, soup, and spaghetti. Yeager said, "We try to provide a variety that kids will like and have nutritional value. We minimize sugary and salty items."

Yeager concluded, "This is a great demonstration of the words of St. Paul, who wrote, 'Nothing counts except faith working through love.'"

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