

Grace in Action

John Wesley, the founder of the early Methodist movement, encouraged us to grow in our faith by "doing good of every possible sort, and, as far as possible, to all." United Methodists continue to live out our faith every day through acts of loving service. Grace member, Nancy Soderstrom, lives out her faith through volunteering and supporting [The Shop](#) in downtown Brainerd. Three years ago Cindy Moore, founder of The Shop, visited Grace's United Methodist Women. She shared the mission of The Shop to nurture youth to improve wellness and healthy life transitions.

Nancy was asked the following questions, read on for her responses:

- How long have you been volunteering there?
- Why is The Shop important to the Brainerd community?
- How can others volunteer and/or support The Shop?

I (Nancy) have been going to The Shop to bring food and some supplies since Cindy Moore came to speak at Grace United Methodist Women about 3 years ago. The Shop is important because it serves homeless teenagers. These kids find themselves on the streets for many different reasons; some have disabilities, parents with mental health issues, and more.

The Shop is here to provide a place for youth where they can grow to be positive, productive, and engaged citizens in the Brainerd Lakes Area. The Shop is also here to close the "opportunity gap" for youth who have yet to find a place to participate in constructive activities, inspiring recreation, and transformative programs.

Youth come to The Shop from 3 to 8 p.m. on Wednesday through Saturday. Before Covid, they would learn living skills (sewing, repairs, cooking for themselves, etc). They would learn how to do a resume and apply for jobs so that they can eventually move into an apartment and be independent. Knowing they are not alone is important. Grace member, Jill Macnmara, gave us bags two years ago at Christmas. Ron (Nancy's spouse) & I bought treats and wrapping so that each child had a package under the tree. This last Christmas, Ron and I gave them a check so they could go out in groups and shop for each other. It's important to create feelings of family for the youth.

Last year The Shop served over 200 kids (ages 12-21). Mostly Ron and I bring food. Due to the coronavirus they went into lockdown where kids could not enter. They supplied masks and sanitizer to kids and handed out meals every Wednesday through Saturday starting at 5 p.m., they could come one at a time and pick up a meal.

One time last summer (2019), I asked the kids what they wanted me to bring; knowing that kids have different tastes. One young man said, “pork chops”. Then a 13 year old girl told me, “I’ve never had a pork chop”. I think that says it all; these kids have been forgotten in many different ways.

The Shop is open now (10 people at a time, in masks). Ron and I drop off meals and food every two weeks on a picnic table ready to serve or heat up. They will accept food items or money to buy things they need. They also accept good clothing and household items to be used when youth get their own place. Contact Erin Wilmot (218-591-8885) or visit [The Shop's website](#) to learn more.



Grace United Methodist Church

Pequot Lakes, Minnesota