

GazetteXtra

From the Delavan GazetteXtra

Loaves, fishes and granola bars: Delavan church feeds the children

Catherine W. Idzerda

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Angela Major

Lisa Reshkus arranges boxes of food for the Delavan United Church of Christ Congregational program to provide summer meals for children and their families at Phoenix Park. Reshkus is a member of nearby First Baptist Church.

DELAVAN—Monday through Friday, a miracle on par with the loaves and fishes takes place in Delavan.

It's called Andy's Breakfast Club, and its goal is simple: Feed hungry kids.

Many communities and churches have participated in such ventures, but the way this ministry got its start and the way it expanded make it unusual.

During Lent, the Delavan United Church of Christ Congregational hosted a study group called Hunger at Our Doorstep, said the Rev. Laura McLeod.

At about the same time, church member Leroy Himebauch was thinking about the mission work he does. He has spent a lot of time in Haiti and was considering what to do this year.

"You know, we can do mission work anywhere—in the state, in the county, in the city," Himebauch said.

Instead of going to Haiti this year, Himebauch thought he would use his time, resources and energy at home.

Congregation members, including those who had been involved in the study group, got on board and, without much fuss, decided to feed their community.

That in itself is unusual, McLeod said.

Even the best ministry ideas can get waylaid by nervous fretting.

"It's kind of a radical idea," Himebauch said. "Instead of asking 'How are we going to pay for it' and 'Who's going to volunteer,' the bottom line is we're just going to pray about it. If it works, great."

And if not, at least they tried.

The church doesn't have a licensed kitchen, so organizers could use only prepackaged food. It was expensive, but they didn't have a choice.

Just a few weeks into the program, Immanuel United Church of Christ in Walworth heard about Andy's Breakfast Club. It has a food pantry and access to less-expensive packaged food. As a result, the food supply multiplied.

Himebauch described it as "a blessing that came out of nowhere."

The first breakfast site was in Phoenix Park, across from the church.

But organizers found they weren't reaching as many kids as they had hoped. Working with a local poverty task force, they decided to expand their operations to a low-income apartment complex and a trailer park.

First Baptist Church, located across from Phoenix Park, agreed to provide volunteers for the Phoenix Park location.

The breakfast, which is served from 8:30 to 9:30 a.m., includes milk, fruit, yogurt, cheese sticks and a pastry, cereal or granola bar.

On a recent Wednesday morning, the two churches fed about 30 kids in each location.

In a note to the congregation, McLeod called the multiplication of the food, volunteers, churches and donations "our own miracle of loaves and fishes."

Along with that work, the church is also partnering with the Delavan-Darien School District's summer bookmobile to provide Popsicles and healthy snacks for kids. The district's reading specialists distribute the snacks when they are traveling with the bookmobile.

The breakfast club was named after Andy Himebauch, Leroy's son, who died in 2003.

Andy "had friends everywhere" from all social strata, Leroy Himebauch said.

"He had a magnetic personality," he said.

- See more at:

http://www.gazettextra.com/20150704/loaves_fishes_and_granola_bars_delavan_church_feeds_the_children#sthash.sicbtXGN.dpuf

TO HELP

Checks can be made out to Delavan UCC with Andy's Breakfast Club in the memo line. They can be sent to Delavan UCC, 123 E. Washington St., Delavan, WI 53115. Food donations cannot be accepted as the church must ensure packaging and expiration dates.