

NEWS UPDATE 8/24/15

By Nancy Holum

"LISTENING SESSION" about Our Neighbors in Need

Held on August 18, 2015, from 1:30 to 3:00 p.m., at the Merrimac Village Hall

Present were: Debbie Breneman (Merrimac UMC Mission Committee Chairperson), Dorothy Imwold, Char Olson, Susan Baumann-Duren (Sauk Prairie School District Social Worker), Sid Malek (Lead Teacher at Merrimac Community Charter School), Pat Sellers, Pastor Roxi Gnatzig, Jim Malmberg, Patti Brown, Jody and Mike Scott, Michele Hopp, Jim Kratzke, Chris Blau, Cheryl Spink, Nancy Holum, and Pastor Lil from the Lutheran Church who will be holding a meeting for her people next Tuesday.

Dorothy explained the origin of a food bag distribution program for children which is used in her church in Florida. It was started in their school district three years ago by a school nutritionist. Our interest stemmed from a true story told by Michele Hopp.

In the Sauk Prairie School District, there are presently 87 homeless children ages 3 to 18. This is the known count and it could be double that if everyone registered. The people who are homeless are those who live with another family or out of doors, or couch kids who stay with whoever will take them in. Heritage Credit Union in Sauk City and Gander Mountain supply back packs, water bottles, gloves, batteries, etc., for these kids who may have nowhere to go after school. Social workers receive referrals from schools, churches, and the police. The food bags are presently distributed four times a year, at Thanksgiving, Christmas, Spring Break and the start of summer and are distributed to 145 families in the Sauk Prairie School District. They are packed by the older kids and delivered to the schools. A \$20 grocery store gift certificate is also in the bag and a coupon for 1 ½ lbs. of meat from Wyttenbach Meats in Prairie du Sac. There are six schools that benefit in our district. They are Sauk Prairie High School, Sauk Prairie Middle School, Tower Rock Elementary School, Grand Avenue Elementary School, the new Bridges Elementary School and, of course, Merrimac Community Charter Elementary School. The total school district population is 2,783 today.

Our plan and need would be to distribute a food bag to 12 families once a month only at Merrimac Community Charter School. This would be distributed to their homes by Sid, therefore keeping all names private. Jody reminded us that all users should never be referred to as poor or hungry (terms like that). These are our neighbors in need. Only Sid will know who receives the bags.

Note: After the meeting, Dorothy purchased 100 bags for our use, realizing that some of them will be lost. A list of possible items will be attached to the bag. If a child has an allergy, that will be listed on the label. On Sunday at church, we had a sign-up sheet for those of us who want to donate either food for bags (estimate of \$15 per bag) or cash. These sheets will be circulated again this weekend to those who did not commit yesterday.

Workers and Food Needed for Chicken Barbecue this Saturday, 8/29/15, 4-7 p.m.

Don't forget about the chicken barbecue this Saturday, August 29, from 4-7 p.m. Please call Kris Hermanson at 608-963-5237 to volunteer your help. We didn't get the volunteers we usually require to hold this event. We need both workers and food.