



NEWS

St. Monica School students hungry to help

A Girard Estate school hosted a nutrition-based celebration.

By Christopher Isaac

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St. Monica School learners aided an initiative that brought in nearly 30 tons of food.
Photo by Richard Barnes

On Monday, Nutritional Development Services of the Archdiocese of Philadelphia celebrated acquiring donations of nearly 60,000 pounds of food in the completion of their 2014 Peanut Butter and Jelly Drive. Students from St. Monica School, 2500 S. 16th St., gathered to represent one of the sixty schools that participated in the drive, with around two dozen students helping to pack their institution's contributions up to be taken to those in need.

"The kids have such big hearts," Anne Ayella, Assistant Director at Nutritional Development Services said. "When you share the stories about real life people who will be helped, they're really touched. That spirit of service stays with them their whole lives."

Through the contributions of the enrollees at the Girard Estate-based site and the other 59 participating schools, Nutritional Development Services plans to distribute the provisions across 40 food cupboards and soup kitchens. The work will benefit not only the Philadelphia region, but also food cupboards in Montgomery, Bucks, Chester and Delaware counties.

As for why the kids were donating peanut butter and jelly in particular, Ayella said, "It doesn't have to be refrigerated, it can last a long time, so it's probably the food cupboards favorite food to get."

While donations of any sort are appreciated, the cupboards particularly like receiving healthy, nonperishable foods that most people enjoy.

As the children gathered up the food in boxes, Ayella reminded them of all the different people who would benefit from their work.

"We're going to take a minute to remember everybody in our area who maybe is worried about food today," she said. "Maybe somebody lost their job, maybe somebody's sick, getting out of the hospital or they had a fire."

Nutritional Development Services and St. Monica's don't want this to be a one time act of charity for the students, hoping the drive fosters a giving spirit in the children.

"At St. Monica's, we try to stress outreach to the poor and those who are in need," Principal Barbara Inforzato said of the site's allegiance to Christian tenets. "So we try to encourage the children to remember others, and they are always so very generous in their response no matter what kind of drive we have."

St. Monica's works in collaboration with the entity around the year for other food gathering missions as well. Nutritional Development Services began as a program in 1971 to serve hot lunches for inner city schools, but has expanded in its operations since then and recently marked its 40th anniversary as an agency of the Archdiocese.

As the car bearing St. Monica's donations drove away, and the kids began to return to class, Ayella commented on the core of the drive's purpose, saying, "In our world, there's a lot of people who worry about food, and

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