

FCCLA Food Kit Press Release

For several years, Mrs. Wood, High School Family and Consumer Science teacher has envisioned transforming her back room into a food pantry to serve the needs of food insecure students. Last spring, the Career and Technical Departments consisting of FCS/FCCLA, Ag/FFA, Business/FBLA, and Industrial Technology banded together to host a food drive to stock said food pantry. This was a month long event where all students were encouraged to bring in non-perishable food items for the pantry. The group of students who brought in the most food was awarded with an ice cream party hosted by FCCLA.

Upon returning to school this fall, Mrs. Wood was brainstorming better ways to get the food to students in need. She had a conversation with Mr. Watts, the Instructional Coach at the High School, expressing her concerns and the fact that students seem overwhelmed with the amount of food on the shelves and just what to do with the food. They came up with the idea for food kits and after doing some research, Mrs. Wood was able to find 25 shelf stable food pantry kit recipes. These recipes would be printed and bagged along with all the food needed to fulfill the recipes. An example would be a ziptop bag complete with a creamy chicken casserole recipe that includes 2 boxes of mac and cheese, 1 large can of chicken, and a can of creamed soup. This meal can be made without milk or butter which is sometimes not available in the home.

Currently, Mrs. Wood is running a campaign to fulfill the meal kits. What that means is, she has a lot of the ingredients for the recipes but needs to fill in with a few basic ingredients like creamed soups, beans, pasta, tomatoes, etc. Those things will need to be purchased. The food kit drive is different in that we are also accepting cash to help fill in the gaps where the food pantry is lacking. On October 2nd, there will be a table at the volleyball game for people to contribute to the meal kits if they so choose. This can be in the form of canned goods or cash. Later, in October, there will be another drive, similar to the one that was held in the spring, for students and teachers wanting to contribute to the food kit drive. Students and teachers are already giving. One student handed Mrs. Wood \$20 and told her it was for the food pantry. He said he struggled last year and needed the pantry, but this year he's doing okay and wants to help those that are in need. After hearing this, Mrs. Wood realized the pantry is becoming more than just a place to get food. It's also a lesson in life about generosity and gratitude, something that didn't occur to her when this idea was born.

Students have been notified via email and by signage around the school that the food pantry is open Monday through Wednesday from 3:00 to 3:30 for anyone that feels the need to use it, no questions asked. So far Mrs. Wood says it's been difficult getting students to come for help. We hope to have more signs in each of the classrooms and more exposure regarding the food kits so that students know what is available to them. Mrs. Kennedy, High School Business Teacher, has been doing all the advertising in the school and around town.

When asked what sparked this interest in a food pantry, Mrs. Wood responded, "This is sort of a memorial to a student who came through my doors several years ago. He wasn't a food insecure student but like most growing boys, he was always hungry and since I taught foods classes, he knew there would be food in my room. It helped that I had known his family for years and he felt comfortable stopping in just to say 'hi'. His passing had a profound effect on me and the food pantry is one way I keep his memory alive."

Please contact Mrs. Wood at the Denison High School for more information about the food kits and be sure to come to the volleyball game on October 2nd to support the Monarchs and this worthy cause. Anyone participating will get their name in a drawing for Mrs. Wood's famous cupcakes to be given at the end of the JV game.