

North Elementary's "Project Third Day" ensures less fortunate won't go without food over 3-day weekend

by Madelaine Gerard, Staff Writer
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GODFREY – As educators, teachers like third-grade teacher **Barbara Erwinat North Elementary School** have become large influences within their student's lives.

Of the over 500 students who attend the school in Godfrey, 60 percent live in poverty. Many children rely on free school breakfasts and lunches for their daily meals during the school year.

On three-day weekends, however, some students may go without that meal they will be missing while they are out of school.

Taking a lead from **Carlinville Elementary School**, Erwin proposed the idea to implement **Project Third Day** to Assistant Principal **Ann McLaughlin** and Principal **Tiana Montgomery**.

Project Third Day is an organized giveaway of over 40 bags of healthy food, snacks and beverages to keep the school's less fortunate students full and happy over the long weekends throughout the school year.



“Each month, I head to Walmart, overfill two carts with non-perishable food items to fill around 40 bags for students,” Erwin said. “Only the Social Skills teacher and school’s social workers are aware of what students are on the list to receive the bags. They are brought down discretely and receive their bags before heading home from school for the long weekend.”

Not including Thanksgiving or Christmas break, students have around 10-day weekends built into the school’s schedule. From holidays like Labor Day to Casmir Pulaski Day, these students who may have gone without before can enjoy filling and healthy snacks like granola bars, crackers, cereals, pudding, peanut butter, ravioli, fresh fruit and fruit cups along with Capri Sun drinks over the weekend.

“We have a lot of children who are homeless or even sleeping in hotels,” Erwin said. “One mother told me after she was contacted to be a part of the program that she had no idea how she was going to feed her children that week, so I knew we were doing the right thing.”

McLaughlin said one of the primary concerns of the project’s implementation was how the school was going to pay for the food. Erwin sought the help of the Godfrey Walmart Supercenter location, which provided \$50 gift cards. However, this could only slightly assist the project, which takes about \$400 a month to take off. In the project’s humble beginnings, her own husband decided to pick up the tab of what funds she couldn’t raise.

Luckily for the school, the community has been an excellent help throughout the entire process. Parishioners from **Christway Church in Godfrey** have graciously donated time to bag all of the treats and some monetary support to the program. **Elm Street Presbyterian Church** has also donated money to keep the children fed. Even the **Harmon Family at Harmon Auction in Shipman** has assisted in the efforts.

The school’s faculty and staff are gracious for the donations given by all of the organizations above but are still in need of support for the local program. Donations can be sent to **North Elementary School, located at 5600 Godfrey Road**. If donating, please attach a note or memo designating the cash for Project Third Day.



