

# Spreading Christmas Joy: Bernard Long Elementary School Executes It Perfectly This Week Just in Time For Holidays

by Chris Rhodes, Reporter  
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**MADISON** - If Spreading Christmas joy had a formula, it was perfectly executed Wednesday afternoon at Bernard Long Elementary School's Celebration of Donation.

More than 28 Madison families, many with several children, received hope and joy this Christmas through the donations and love of many involved in the Madison community in the form of a "Donation Drive-Thru."

"With all that 2020 has brought our families, these donations are a pure display of what our community embodies...the City of Madison is family," Madison School Principal Terrien Fennoy said. "Some of the donated items were food, toys, gift cards, school supplies, winter clothing, Christmas trees, monetary for bills, etc. We had the local police and fire departments, mayor and city representatives, several local churches present for this special occasion."

Janette Hesse, one of the guiding forces behind this beautiful celebration in Madison, said: "It exploded into all of this. All this love in this school district and this building is wonderful. Everyone gave and the entire school from the janitors to teachers to paraprofessionals to cooks everyone played a part."

"This is the first time doing this and it turned into this from just an idea of a dinner. And everyone just kept rolling with it. These are trying times with COVID-19 and we thought we need to give back to families who are having a hard time. I have had a job the whole time but a lot of parents and families have not. I know a lot are struggling and I thought this would be a good way to give back to our community."

Fennoy said with the COVID-19 Pandemic going, this Donation Drive-Thru was just what was needed for many of these families.

"My students have been 100 percent remote since March," the principal said. "The only interaction they have had is through Zoom or Google Classroom. We wanted to make sure our families who are having kind of financial difficulty, had a little extra this Christmas. It started out as a dinner for one family so we collaborated together got some information from parents to make sure it was OK and donations grew and grew."

"Donations from our staff, our community partners, The Madison Police and Fire Department, the St. Louis Parole Department, made this happen. The St. Louis Department of Parole sponsored two students who lost family members to COVID-19. We had had Frick's Quality Meats Company donate hams. We had a mom with seven grandchildren taken care of with gift cards and monetary donations."

Principal Fennoy said the key to the whole thing was everybody in Madison "came together" for the good of these families needing a helping hand this Christmas.

[Dan Brannan also contributed to this story.](#)