

A Gift From Their Hearts: Generous Werts Donation, Employees, Make OSF Saint Anthony's Back To School Event Memorable

by Lucas Sousa
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ALTON - Dwight and Cheryl Werts are always generous to the Riverbend area, but one recent event featured something near and dear to both their hearts - making sure children return to school prepared with the right send-off from the community.



OSF Saint Anthony's Health Center hosted a Community Fair recently in the parking lot of the hospital as a way for children and families to have appropriate back-to-school resources.

Dwight Werts said OSF Saint Anthony's approached him about helping contribute and he talked to his wife and he said to her, "Why don't we just sponsor it?"

Dwight knew OSF Saint Anthony's was going to have to raise money to put on the event they wanted to have, so he decided just to take care of it."

Dwight and family own Werts Welding & Tank Service, Inc. He and his wife have always helped charitable and civic causes throughout the region.

"It has been a rough couple of years with COVID, and we just wanted them to have a good send-off," he said. "We were able to attend the event, and there was an unbelievable number of people who showed up. People started lining up at 9 o'clock in the morning for the 300 new backpacks that were going to be distributed. There were all kinds of different stands set up to teach kids about health-related issues, dentistry hygiene stuff, and more. ARCH was there with a helicopter for the children to see and the fire department, police department, UPS, and many others were there."

The employees from OSF Saint Anthony's graciously collected and distributed a free bag of school supplies for the first 300 kids ages 4-12. The participants enjoyed games, activities, and prizes for the family. It was a wonderful day for the children and families. More than 500 people attended the OSF Saint Anthony's Summer Send-off.

Jerry Rumph, MHA, FACHE, President OSF HealthCare Saint Anthony's Health Center, said the event was an opportunity for the community to have access to essential resources offered both by the hospital but also other community partners to educate the area residents on the resources available and giving them the tools to access care.

Rumph said: "First a big thanks to both Dwight and Cheryl for their donation that enabled us to have this event. OSF Saint Anthony's Health Center's vision is to strengthen our community by providing accessible, affordable, high-quality healthcare to all. Hand-in-hand with that vision, we sponsored the Community Fair focused on helping members of our community improve their health through wellness screenings, health education resources, and youth-specific programs and events."

The Community Fair offered activities, games, and food for people of all ages. Some of the participants were:

OSF Saint Anthony's Health Center departments

Alton Police Department with a K-9 Unit

Alton Fire Department with the Smoke House

ARCH Helicopter

Boys and Girls Club of Alton

Center Stone youth and family

Helmkamp Construction

Illinois Central School Bus Company

Lakeside EMS

Lewis and Clark Community College

Madison County Health Department

SSM Cardinal Glennon Hospital

12 Counties South Western Illinois Laborer District Council

UPS

Walmart in Wood River

"It just warmed our hearts that we were able to do it," Dwight said of the OSF Community Fair sponsorship. "I told my wife after we left, that I would do it again in heartbeat. We were glad we were able to help them out."

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