

# Civic Memorial's "Shopping Spree" Meets Students' Needs

by Sydney Sinks, News Reporter  
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BETHALTO - Students at Civic Memorial High School are learning in style after a clothing drive allowed students to “shop” for clothes and hygiene products.

Kaitlynn Niemeyer helped organize the drive. She explained that Civic Memorial asked surrounding communities for clothing and hygiene products to give to their students.

The school set up all of the items so that students from Civic Memorial and the Bethalto University program could grab anything they needed. According to Niemeyer, the entire culture at the high school has changed because of the “shopping spree.”

“The goal, I think, was to really just offer something to students to meet their needs without it feeling like an embarrassment,” Niemeyer explained. “We do have so many low-income students and with our district’s poverty rate continuously growing, we’re seeing that more and more students across the district need those things. And so I think the goal was to really, obviously, meet students’ needs to get supplies out but in a way that wasn’t a shameful shopping day. There are students who fall through the cracks that you don’t even know need things like that.”

Because there were so many donations, the free store was open to every student. Niemeyer compared it to a thrift store where students could check out the items, try them on and decide what to take.

Niemeyer said it was an “eye-opening” experience to see how many people needed items. Some students expressed that they had never had clothing that fit before, and others noted that this would mark the first time in a month where they had products like shampoo and deodorant.

“So many teachers even came in and got stuff,” she added. “Students were able to get deodorants and shampoos and conditioners, and some students that you would have never expected were down there, so we were able to reach all students who needed those things.”

The event was so successful that Civic Memorial plans to designate an entire classroom to clothing and hygiene items starting next year. Students will be able to access the classroom whenever they need something.

Niemeyer said that the attitude in the school has also improved as a result of the drive. Students are eager to show off their new clothes and can refocus on school now that some of their basic needs are met.

“It’s so crazy to see how quickly something so small can change the trajectory of a culture within a school,” she said. “So many students are still coming in with different outfits every day and showing them off. It’s like a shopping spree just happened, almost. It has made the culture in the high school just so much more happy, and so many more kids are ready to come to school the next day...It’s going to keep growing, and we’re so thankful for all of the community’s support.”

To donate to the continuing Civic Memorial clothing and hygiene drive, you can contact Niemeyer at [kniemeyer@bethalto.org](mailto:kniemeyer@bethalto.org) or call the school at (618) 377-7230 for more information.