

Old Dominion Dames/ORCA

BACKPACKS FOR HUNGRY CHILDREN

The second annual Backpacks for Kids drive was again a huge success thanks to the efforts of the Old Dominion Dames and the Ocean Ridge Charities Association (ORCA). This year 123 backpacks filled with food were donated by 85 Ocean Ridge residents--a near 45% increase over last year's inaugural effort.

The food packs are collected under the auspices of Matthews Ministry—a Brunswick County non-profit that provides food via weekend backpacks through 12 county schools for children who don't have enough to eat at home. Begun in 2010, the program now provides over 500 backpacks to school children to take home on Fridays returning them on Mondays to be re-filled for the next weekend.

According to its founder and director Kristie Disbrow “Teachers will tell you that these food supplements are changing lives. There are less behavior problems, higher test scores and happier kids. It doesn't take a lot to make a big difference in the life of a child.” Regarding the Ocean Ridge effort Kristie noted that “the Ocean Ridge alone generates nearly 20% of the total backpacks that are collected at the beginning of the school year to help feed children on weekends. That's impressive”

This year the ORCA/Old Dominion Dames partnership distributed nearly 160 backpacks after picking up Sandpiper Bay's contribution of 36. Of those: 15 went to West Brunswick High School; 64 to Town Creek Elementary, and; 80 to nearby Jessie Mae Monroe Elementary.

Larry Gray (ORCA) and Barbara Ellenberger (ODD & ORCA) headed up the drive. According to Larry “Once again a group of generous Ocean Ridge residents stepped up and made this possible” Added Barbara “we never expected such a big increase in the number of donors this year and we hope to do even better in 2015.”

And the support activities continue throughout the year. One week per month, Old Dominion Dames volunteers to pick up food for the backpacks at the Matthews Ministry food pantry in Southport and transport it to Jessie Mae Monroe Elementary. For more information about Matthew's Ministry, go to their website www.matthewsministry.com If you'd like to help out with the food deliveries, contact Barbara at 575-8254 or blellenberger@yahoo.com

A special thanks to Larry, Barbara and Faye Arvonio for their leadership on this initiative, to the volunteers that lent a hand and to Ocean Ridge residents who so generously contributed in making this backpack support effort a reality.

Submitted by Mike Gildea