



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

August 26, 2022

UNIONTOWN SALVATION ARMY PARTNERS WITH LOCAL ORGANIZATIONS, DISTRIBUTES BACK-TO-SCHOOL SUPPLIES

Uniontown, PA – Nearly 200 children in the Uniontown and Laurel Highlands school districts will be well-equipped for the upcoming school year, thanks to the Uniontown Salvation Army's recent back-to-school distribution.

The event was a community-wide effort, supported by local organizations, churches and area agencies.

Parents and kids in the Uniontown Salvation Army's six-ZIP code service area (15401, 15416, 15445, 15456, 15465, and 15472) were invited to its West Fayette Street location Aug. 18 to receive backpacks full of supplies tailored to their ages.

"When a child applies, we find out what grade they're in, and the bags change based on their needs," Salvation Army Captain Erin Rischawy said, noting the organization works with the school districts to find out what supplies generally are required in each grade.

Capt. Rischawy said she believes the supply distribution is something the Uniontown Salvation Army has done for several years. When the COVID-19 pandemic hit, she said, the event was a drive-through distribution.

This year, parents and kids arrived in person, but they still needed to pre-register. Capt. Rischawy said numbers for the Aug. 18 event had tripled from 2021.

"We originally had 186 children signed up for our registration. Last year, we had 60," she said. "I think the advent of the online application has made it more convenient."

Not only was it more convenient to sign up this year, Capt. Rischawy said, but she believes it was also more needed.

"I think a lot of it has to do with the changing economy," she said.

The combination of supply chain issues and rising costs of food and other necessities, she continued, can mean school supplies are harder to find and families have less money to spend on them because a larger portion of their budgets are going toward grocery and utility bills.

Capt. Rischawy and caseworker Alyssa Batronis said Uniontown Salvation Army purchased all of its supplies through donations from the Kiwanis Club of Uniontown; the Methodist churches of Centerville, Beallsville and Brownsville; and Grace Community Church. Backpacks, they said, were purchased from Precise Promotions.

While picking up school supplies, families also had the chance to interact with several area agencies, including Head Start, PA CareerLink, A Child's Place, United Way, CASA of Fayette County and the Fayette County Drug and Alcohol Commission. Head Start staffers helped check in families and distribute packs, while representatives from the other agencies staffed tables full of informational materials and giveaway supplies.

"We wanted families to have the opportunity to come and see agencies and connect with some people who may be able to help them," Capt. Rischawy said.

She said the Uniontown Salvation Army will continue to serve the community through such events as the distribution of food boxes – which will remain drive-through for convenience – and the Christmas angel tree. For more information on the Thanksgiving distribution, angel tree and other Salvation Army events, Capt. Rischawy said families can follow the organization's Facebook page, @UniontownCorps.

To learn more about Fayette County, visit www.FayetteCountyPA.org.

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This communication is part of the Fayette County PR Initiative, which is funded through the Fayette County Local Share Account (LSA) and Hotel Tax Grants in cooperation with the Fayette County Board of Commissioners, Fayette Chamber of Commerce, The Redevelopment Authority of the County of Fayette, The Redstone Foundation and other partners. This funding has been designated for the continued promotion and marketing of Fayette County, PA.

For more information, contact Kristi Rooker Kassimer, Public Relations Specialist, at 412-691-0262, kkassimer@fayettecountypa.info or Jamie Rankin, Journalist, at 724-434-4486, jamierankin13@gmail.com.