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St. Stephen's Church to Serve as Community Link for 2010 Backpack Project

By Lucy Amaral



The Klein family (Steve, Kimi, Matt, and Roxy) helped deliver backpacks to St. Cornelius last year

parishioners gathered the first 50 backpacks," she said. "Then, people (from the community) were dropping off packs filled with everything we requested."

Hudak said eventually the church had 100 brand new backpacks filled with school supplies, plus copy paper, classroom supplies and monetary donations to take to St. Cornelius. "Because everyone in our area is so generous, the stores began to run out of supplies," she said. "Everyone went above and beyond on this project." This year, Hudak said, the needs are nearly the same. Traditional school supplies such as glue sticks, and colored markers for the younger grades have been requested, while some of the older grades are hoping not only for basics like pencils and markers but also extras like math compasses and writing journals. Also on the list are general classroom supplies like paper towels, tissues, and reams of paper. "This is a boon for the teachers," said Hudak. "(Last year) for the first time in years the teachers had an abundance of supplies."

Chaired by Roxy Klein and Maria Hjelm, Hudak said this year's committee hopes to again reach the 100-backpack number. All donations are welcome and can be dropped off at St. Stephen's Church's entrance or at their office. The deadline is August 8, Hudak added, so the backpacks can be taken to St. Cornelius for the school's Back to School night. Supply lists and other information about the backpack project can be found at www.ststephensorinda.org. Hudak said she hopes that with the support of the community this program continues to grow. "We want to offer everyone the opportunity to get in there in a small but meaningful way to help those who have less," she said.

The current school year isn't even over yet, but St. Stephen's Episcopal Church in Orinda is already gearing up for Back to School 2010. For the second year, the Church's outreach committee has set a goal to donate new, fully-loaded backpacks to St. Cornelius Catholic Elementary School in Richmond. The project will kick off on Memorial Weekend with announcements during all St. Stephen's services, followed by an information campaign to the Lamorinda area.

According to St. Stephen's Reverend Mary L. Hudak, last year's project came as an offshoot of efforts by parishioners who work on various projects with St. Cornelius. Hudak said that the families at St. Cornelius struggle financially and parishioners felt that backpacks and school supplies donated by St. Stephen's would be welcome. She said the St. Stephen's Outreach Committee discussed the options, and the Backpack Project was born.

"This congregation is incredibly generous. We saw a need and saw where we could help," said Hudak. Armed with school-supply request lists from St. Cornelius, the committee began collecting the needed items. Hudak said the members of St. Stephen's and the Lamorinda community came together quickly. "Our

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