



NEWS ARCHIVE:

Roman Catholic Diocese of Saskatoon

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Catholic schools collaborate to collect staple items for Saskatoon Friendship Inn

By Blake Sittler

Greater Saskatoon Catholic Schools and the diocese of Saskatoon are collaborating with the Friendship Inn to help supply staple food items to some of those in most urgent need.

The project stemmed from a conversation about schools partnering with the Friendship Inn. A similar experiment had been attempted earlier

“Two students from St. Luke volunteered for their confirmation project and wanted to fill the shelves. They went back to their school and then the whole school raised cereal for the Inn,” recounted Doell.

Unlike a general food drive, this project aims to raise specific staple foods often needed by the Friendship Inn. These staples include breakfast cereal, pasta, sugar, powdered milk and canned fruit and vegetables.

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The pilot project, which has been in development since September 2010, unfolds in two parts. The first step includes a presentation to the entire school from representatives of the Friendship Inn, the school division and the Catholic Pastoral Center.

During this first week, students study age-appropriate material about the gospel values of charity, love and justice. Gilbert Chevrier, Religious Education Coordinator for Greater Saskatoon Catholic Schools, put together much of the resources for the schools.

“In the early grades, we build on their natural desire to help others by teaching about the Christian virtue of charity... In the older grades, the virtue of justice is promoted by having the students reflect on questions like, ‘Why are people hungry? What are the causes of poverty in Saskatoon?’” explained Chevrier.

The second part of the project involves the elementary school children actively gathering food donations. Each school only collects one particular item during their two-week partnership.

The final part of the project includes staff from the Friendship Inn picking up the food from the particular school. Many students offer help in carrying the food to the van.

Project coordinators were hoping to attract five schools to the pilot project but found themselves inundated with over a dozen schools wanting to be part of the fledgling outreach.

In a letter to the schools, it is noted that the Friendship Inn provides more than simply food, “it is also a place of friendship, safety and acceptance... Even when physical hunger is satiated, the hunger for friendship and community remains”. The letter is signed by Doell, Saskatoon Bishop Donald Bolen and Bev Hanson, Director of Education for GSCS.

The theme of the project is “Pooling our Love for the Friendship Inn” and is represented by a children’s pool filled with food.

The first school to take part was St. Bernard Elementary in Lakeview. Principal Darren Hyshka took the idea to his staff and parent committee and found many were eager to participate.

“Many of us are very fortunate to have never experienced extreme hunger in our life. As Catholic Christian people, it is our responsibility to share our blessings with others and especially those in need. As teachers, we also need to provide opportunities for our students to learn and instil the gospel virtues of love and respect, service and social justice,” said Hyshka.

“It was our aspiration that this opportunity provided our students with the experience, compassion and knowledge to continue to share their blessings with others,” he added.



After the last school in the pilot completes the project, teachers, students and the coordinators hope to gather to evaluate and plan for the next school year. Coordinators of the project hope to see this become a regular practice of Catholic elementary schools in the future.

“The only thing that we need now is to find a school that is ‘nut-friendly’ so we could collect peanut butter,” laughed Doell.

Schools currently involved include: St. Bernard, Georges Vanier, Pope John Paul, St. Gerard, St. George, Fr. Robinson, St. Peter, St. Matthew, St. Angela, St. Edward, St. Philip, St. John, Bishop Pocock, and Mother Teresa.

Opening its doors in March 1969, the Friendship Inn is open 365-days of the year. On the first day it opened, the Inn served six people breakfast. Now the Inn serves 500 meals a day. It has long been one of the ministries supported by the diocesan Bishop’s Annual Appeal, and the diocese recently handed over full ownership of the building to the helping agency.

