

Constance Free Church works with area schools through Faith Community Partnership

Constance Free Church in Andover has agreed to work with Rum River Elementary and Oak View Middle School in Andover and Coon Rapids Middle School through the "Faith Community Partnership."

Started in 2010, the Faith Community Partnership is a collaborative effort of the Anoka-Hennepin School District, faith-based organizations and broader communities to raise awareness and understanding of compelling community issues and to mobilize people to help meet the basic needs of students.

Jill Discher, the director of Children's Ministry at Constance Free Church, said through the work with the schools, the church hopes to use open communication and creativity to provide immediate response to those in need.

"We hope that the schools will feel comfortable calling and asking to help with 'basic' needs of families so that students can receive a great education," Discher said. "We hope to help while being creative to meet immediate needs and find sustainable solutions as well."



Lynn Schaefer, a social worker at Rum River Elementary, said Constance Free Church has been a great resource for the school. While there are programs available to help people, sometimes people fall through the cracks and are not eligible for help or cannot get help as quickly as they need it.

"Some families are finding themselves in a situation they haven't faced in the past," Schaefer said. "Maybe a family member just lost a job and they don't know what resources are available, or someone suddenly

becomes a one-parent household.

"Rum River is a higher income area, but there have been more significant needs in the past couple of years, especially in the last year. More people are requesting help and are open to receiving it, too."

The Faith Community Partnership helps close that gap for some families.

"The church has provided gas cards for families facing an emergency, provided snacks for students who don't have snacks and held a clothing drive," Schaefer said. "And we have some families who need help this holiday season."

Constance Free Church has also agreed to help Rum River Elementary with their fifth grade "Kindness Retreat" scheduled for Jan. 19 by hosting the event at the church free of charge.

"This is a huge savings to our school and they are helping to support an anti-bullying program for Rum River," Schaefer said.

Moving forward, parents at Rum River are getting involved with conversations about how to best work with Constance Free Church.

"We are going to put our heads together how best to use our faith partner at the holidays and throughout the year," Schaefer said. "This is a huge resource for us."