

Northgate Church forms Faith Community Partnership with River Trail Learning Center and Ramsey Elementary School



Northgate Church in Ramsey has formed Faith Community Partnerships with River Trail Learning Center at L.O. Jacob and Ramsey Elementary in Ramsey.

Started during the 2010-11 school year through the Faith Community Partnership, churches have adopted schools and provided food, personal hygiene and other basic items to help students and their families.

Northgate Pastor Wayne Skaff said church members were talking about what they could do to make a difference in the community, and a member of the congregation brought up the Faith Community Partnership. Skaff said they went online and saw that River Trail and Ramsey Elementary didn't have

partners.

The church was interested in working with Ramsey Elementary because it is close to the Ramsey-based church and River Trail because church members wanted to reach out. River Trail serves students in kindergarten through grade 12 who require specialized instructional services and support in a full-day program.

Skaff met with Heather Brenden, a social worker at River Trail, to talk about how the church could best help students. Brenden said when she received an e-mail about Northgate's interest in working with the school, she "happily jumped on it."

"There is so much that the school does do for students, but we cannot fill all the gaps," Brenden said.

It was decided they would start with a coat drive in December. Members collected coats for the students and delivered them to the school right before the holiday break.

Brenden also told Skaff about a meal the school likes to host for River Trail students and families at a school event, but they often have trouble finding the funding to do so. Skaff's church has committed to serving the meal at the event that will be held in February or March.

"We work so hard to build relationships with families and to get them involved with the school," Brenden said. "We found that having a meal helps parents feel involved."

Skaff and Brenden are also in discussions about having church members talk with students about their professions either in classrooms or as part of a career panel. They are also discussing the possibility of having students shadow a church member during their workday.

"We are hoping to build a great relationship between the congregation and the students," Brenden said. "We want them to meet people from the community and to be thinking about their future and setting goals to reach that future."

Brenden said Skaff is terrific to work with.

"They are a new church and are eager to help and part of the community," Brenden said. "They've been nothing but positive and supportive. We look forward to the relationship growing."

Skaff and Northgate are also working with Ramsey Elementary to provide items for a family in need during the holidays. This could include providing a meal or groceries or gifts for a family's children. The church also hopes to do a school-supply drive at the beginning of next school year.