



Ten backpacks filled with fresh food are being distributed to students at Riverview Elementary School in Quesnel to bring home on Fridays thanks to a partnership between the Quesnel Tillicum Society Friendship Centre and the Rotary Club of Quesnel. (Photo submitted)

Quesnel friendship centre, rotary, team up to fill backpacks with fresh food for families in need

Ten backpacks are being sent out, organizers are looking to expand the program

GREG SABATINO / Mar. 16, 2021 5:30 a.m. / COMMUNITY



A pilot program launched in Quesnel is providing fresh meals for children and families in need.

Offered through a partnership between the Quesnel Tillicum Society Friendship Centre (QTSFC) and the Rotary Club of Quesnel (RCQ), the program offers free food for children and their families during weekends at a time when they are not able to access school breakfast and lunch programs.

Tony Goulet, executive director with the WTSFC, said 10 backpacks filled with fresh food are being distributed to students at Riverview Elementary School in Quesnel to bring home on Fridays. The backpacks are then returned to the school the following Monday.

"In those backpacks we've got a meal that's for four people," Goulet said. "We've got everything you need to make spaghetti, and it's all fresh ingredients."

Goulet said they hope they can offer the program in more places in the community in the future, year round, and even during holidays.

Started roughly three months ago just before to Christmas, Goulet said so far feedback on the program has been phenomenal.

"It's been quite successful so far," he said. "The school identifies the children who are in need and then we do our part."

He said in his estimation there is likely a need for the program in every school, however, noted they would need more in the way of donations and support to make that happen.

Currently, Save-On-Foods helps cover food costs, Goulet said, and the RCQ has been a big help in volunteering to fill and distribute the backpacks.

"Save-On-Foods has been wonderful," Goulet said. "Everything is so fresh." Goulet said based on the program's success they would like to be able to sustain and offer backpacks in more schools and are asking for donations.

"It does cost us money to keep this program running," he said.

A donation link is posted on the the friendship centre's Facebook page and website, he noted.

"It's just a really great program," he said. "And to be able to offer it on weekends and during holidays outside of school time is great. These kids aren't just hungry during school time. They are hungry all the time."

The backpack, itself, is also not being designed with a logo or any marking that would identify it as part of the program.

"We just wanted them to be generic so no one was being discriminated against," Goulet said. "The reaction has been pretty cool and well received at the school."



Donate Here to contribute to the School Backpack Program

QTS has registered with Canada Helps for the Great Canadian Giving Challenge!

From June 1st to 30th, every dollar donated to The Quesnel Tillicum Society via CanadaHelps.org is a chance to win a \$20,000 donation

Click on the Donate Now button to the left of this text box and you will be led to a Canada Helps donation form that will give you the option to select which fundraiser you wish to contribute to from the drop down menu.

