

Rotary Cares for Kids

Rotary Cares for Kids was launched as a District 5010 wide project in the spring of 2017. The idea stemmed from the unfortunate situation which often arises when Alaskan children were being picked up and moved into foster family homes. When the children were moved they seldom had a suitcase, back pack or duffel bag to put the few personal items they might own. Instead, they were often handed a green plastic garbage bag. Thus, they became initially known as the “Garbage Bag Kids”

These children were being uprooted from their homes, separated from their families and placed in strange unfamiliar surroundings. It was often an emotionally terrifying experience for the kids. The 38 clubs of District 5010 saw this as an opportunity to bring a little joy in a very trying time for a young person by providing them a little self-worth and recognition there are people who care for them. The plan was to provide them a backpack or duffel bag of their own with some personal items and a small fleece blanket that is embroidered with “Rotary Cares for Kids”

In April 2017 a committee was formed to define the program and develop and implement a pilot project. Bob Gross, your President Elect at the time played a major role in setting up our initial funding by pledges of his fellow PE’s. The ultimate goal was to deploy the program statewide and make it sustainable over the long term. Also over the following months the clubs generously donated money to purchase these back packs and duffels.

Many Rotarians donated extensive time to organize and manage the program. 500 back packs and 500 duffels were purchased. When the items arrived in late October, 2017 “Packing Parties” were organized to collect the personal items and blankets to put in the back packs.

By the end of 2020, almost 1400 duffel bags/backpacks had been distributed to agencies and clubs. Items have gone to all OCS Regions in Alaska and to several private agencies servicing foster children.

Our partners include:

- The State of Alaska Office of Children’s Services (OCS). .
- Alaska Center for Resource Families (ACRF).
- Beacon Hill under Charity Carmody’s leadership
- Reach 907

Completed projects include:

- Assisting with Holiday Parties: purchasing gifts, helping parents “shop for gifts” and interacted with foster children and their foster parents.
- Gift cards to each youth in long term mental health facilities outside of Alaska .
- The Petersburg club built a perimeter fence for a woman caring for her grandchildren
- Food Gift Cards were provided to Facing Foster Care for young adults that were stuck in college when the pandemic hit and didn’t have access to meals.
- Backpacks were donated to Reach907 Foster Care Kids Camp
- RYLA was gifted backpacks and blankets for distribution to teens
- The Seward and Homer Clubs received backpacks to distribute to youth in need.
- Ketchikan Club provided grocery gift cards for the pediatric department at Peace Health Ketchikan Medical Center for distribution to families and expectant mothers under stress due to unemployment, illness of lack of funds
- Rotary Club of Fairbanks provided Backpacks to Alaska Center for Resource Families for distribution to foster families.

- Rotarians donated more than \$700 in gift cards for party honoring foster kids
- Valley clubs raised \$1500 to help grandparents with beds and bedding for their 5 foster kids
- Interact clubs at East and West High wanted to help homeless kids in their schools so they reached out to Rotary for backpacks.
- Mat Su clubs put up a six foot safety fence for a Wasilla family with two children with disabilities and wandering issues.
- Anchorage Rotarians helped coordinate delivery of a donated dresser to a needy Foster Mom.