

# Ready Kids for School volunteers sought; distribution set Aug. 16

By Pam Chickering Wilson, Union staff writer | Posted: Friday, August 8, 2014 9:41 am

JEFFERSON — Organizers are gathering donations, accumulating and sorting supplies and making final arrangements for the 2014 Ready Kids for School distribution, which takes place Aug. 16 at Jefferson County Fair Park.

Since 2002, the charity distribution has assisted families from throughout Jefferson County by providing school supplies to help needy children start off their school year with the materials they need.

Ready Kids for School serves from 600 to 800 students per year. For the past few years, numbers have been fairly steady, with the program serving 724 children in 2013, said Gail Slight, one of the coordinators of the event and a member of the Ready Kids for School Committee.

Each qualifying student receives a new backpack plus all of the basic school supplies he or she needs for class: pencils, notebooks, folders, crayons, looseleaf paper, scissors, markers and more.

The charity currently is seeking volunteers to assist in walking each child through the lines as he or she selects the items on the class supplies list.

The distribution will take place from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Saturday, Aug 16, in the Activity Center of Jefferson County Fair Park. Volunteers will be needed as of 8:30 a.m. for set-up, although recipients do not arrive until 10 a.m. Volunteers also are being sought to take inventory and pack items away after the distribution has concluded.

Ready Kids for School started in 2002 as an outreach effort by Jefferson's Immanuel Methodist Church. Soon, the church volunteers joined forces with Jefferson County Human Services to assure that the program reaches those it is designed to serve, and the program has grown from there.

Jefferson County Human Services coordinates the event, with volunteers and contributors coming from churches, business, government and civic organizations from across the county.

The program is designed to help families that are experiencing hardships, whose parents currently are unemployed or underemployed, and those in government programs. Participants must register ahead of time through the Human Services Department.

Slight said that the program has seen good support in past years from around the county. With the help of local individuals, businesses, and organizations, the charity has fulfilled a vital need for families across Jefferson County who are struggling, she said.

The Ready Kids for School Committee begins its preparations for each year's distribution in April, meeting every month to coordinate the event. On the day of the event, around 50 volunteers come out to assist students and their families.

There is no deadline for donations to the program. Most needed are monetary contributions, which help

coordinators purchase the most-needed items, following class supplies lists from each school. Also welcome are contributions of basic school supplies, including new backpacks. The program does not give out hand sanitizer, white boards, candy or tissues.

The program is open to any child or teen in need attending any school district centered in Jefferson County or any homeschooler in the county. Applicants are asked to sign up ahead of time through Jefferson County Human Services or the Workforce Development Center. The program requests \$1 per child to help with expenses, to be paid at the time of registration.

Having participants sign up in advance allows program coordinators can obtain the right quantity and type of supplies.

If a qualifying family cannot make it to the official distribution, some exceptions are made through arrangement with the Workforce Development Center.

Families should bring their children's classroom-specific school supply lists when they arrive. Quantities of some items are limited.

Meanwhile, area Lions Clubs are collecting school supplies for Ready Kids for School through the "Stuff the Bus" project at Walmart in Jefferson on Saturday, Aug. 9, from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.,

And for the second year in a row, volunteers from the faith-based charity Wisconsin Dream Center also will be at the Ready Kids for School distribution to inform families of their free back-to-school clinic, which is taking place on the same day at a different location in Jefferson.

The back-to-school clinic, which will take place at 424 E. Sanborn Ave. in Jefferson, will provide free haircuts, bike repair and give-aways, "ask-a-nurse" services, dental screenings, fresh produce, canned goods and essentials, individual/family portraits, new underwear and socks, a lunch on-site, and information on other community resources.

To volunteer during part or all of the Ready Kids for School distribution, people may contact Katie at Human Services by telephone at (920) 674-8119 or by email at [katies@jeffersoncountywi.gov](mailto:katies@jeffersoncountywi.gov).

Monetary donations are accepted year-round. Checks may be written to Ready Kids for School and sent to 201 E. Racine St., Jefferson, WI, 53549.

School supplies may be dropped off at the Jefferson County Human Services office at 874 Collins Road during office hours.

For more information on the Wisconsin Dream Center and its back-to-school clinic, people may call (262)-893-8063 or visit the charity's website at [www.wisconsindreamcenter.org](http://www.wisconsindreamcenter.org).

"We want to thank the community for their support of this program," Slight said, adding a special thanks to all of the volunteers who donate their time to make the Ready Kids for School distribution days successful. She said the volunteers hear from participants that this effort really makes a difference for their families.

"School supplies can be really costly, especially for those with large families, and if they're already struggling, it can be a real stress. We can help children start out their school year on the right foot," she said.