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Berrien Springs Group Collects Backpacks for Students

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in their lives without the opportunity to hear the message of the crucified, risen and soon coming Savior. In Michigan alone, we need hundreds of baptisms on our college campuses!

What can you do to help? If you are a local church in a university town, create a Public Campus Ministries director to sit on your church board. Our goal is to have every church near a campus appoint someone to this position in the next year. Support your student group with funds, food or space to hold small groups, social events, evangelistic meetings, retreats and conferences like GYC. Contact our department when you know of a student who has decided to attend a public college or university in Michigan or anywhere else. In most



Israel Ramos, Public Campus Ministries director, teaches students how to reach their peers for Jesus.

cases, the decisions students make within the first month of their college life will affect the rest of their time in college. Even if you are not a member at the university church, you can still support public campus ministry by sponsoring a missionary or sending a non-Adventist student contact to GYC or Michigan Conference Hi-C and Spring retreats.

Public colleges and universities have students from around the world. Literally, world missions comes to us. When we reach the campus, we reach the world. Let's pray for and work with our students — our missionaries, our Adventist ambassadors on our public colleges and universities — that the day will soon come when reformations of primitive godliness will be revived, led by the Seventh-day Adventist Church, preparing public campuses for the imminent return of Christ.

Israel Ramos, director of Public Campus Ministries, Michigan Conference

Editor's note: Indiana and Wisconsin conferences also offer leadership in public campus ministry.



Photos by Jane Thayer

At the "Stuff a Bus" event, people brought backpacks and school supplies for qualified students in both public and parochial schools in Berrien Springs, Mich.

Berrien Springs group collects backpacks for students

Michigan—A newly-formed community group has collected backpacks, school supplies and money to provide for the needs of 200 qualified students who attend the Berrien Springs public or parochial schools. The project was initiated by Bonnie Chadderdon, director of the AfterSchool Rocks program in the Berrien Springs High School; Gresford Thomas, a Seminary student; and Alyssa Valenzuela, a counseling intern at the high school and May graduate of Andrews University. Others soon joined to help.

Because the group was not formed until the end of June, it took a flurry of

planning and activity to set up a system to promote the backpack drive, collect the materials, find a place to store and sort them, and drive to nearby towns to purchase school supplies as various stores gave special deals on back-to-school supplies.

Selecting the name "Backpacks for Berrien," the group obtained permission from businesses, churches, banks and other public places to set up collection boxes and jars for donations.

A "Stuff the Bus" event was held to raise awareness of the project and collect backpacks and school supplies. A big green school bus was provided by Johnie and Mandy Boone, and parked at the township hall. (Green and white — for Shamrocks — are the Berrien Springs schools' colors.) Choosing a day to have the event was no easy matter. The backpack program was a community-wide drive.



Alyssa Valenzuela checks contents of the backpacks.

All of the school supplies and the 200 backpacks collected or purchased with donations were taken to the Living Word Fellowship gymnasium. Tables were set up and the supplies sorted. Backpacks were somewhat sorted by grade level, with secondary students getting the sturdier models. Grade-appropriate school supplies were grouped into four levels: K-2, 3-5, 6-8, and 9-12.

The filled backpacks were taken to the four public schools, three Adventist schools, and one Lutheran school where they were distributed by the administration. The Backpacks for Berrien group suggested that one criterion be students who qualify for free or reduced lunches.

At the end of the day the backpacks were delivered to the schools, Evelyn Savory, principal of Ruth Murdoch Elementary School, reported, "I am pleased to let you know that we have already started the distribution and have seen not only the response of surprise from both children and parents, but also tears of appreciation on the faces of the adults as they leave the office."

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