Herald-Journal

IN A HURRY

5 Things to read today

Healthy Eating 101

The Healthy Eating Decisions program aims to get students in the county's elementary schools to make healthier food choices.

Districts embrace healthy eating program

By LEE G. HEALY
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Even the youngest students might know that fresh fruit is healthier than macaroni and cheese, but knowing the nutritional facts in the average school lunch can be tricky. That's where the Healthy Eating Decisions program comes in.

After a successful pilot run at two Spartanburg School Districts last year, the program is now being offered to all 40 elementary schools throughout the county, hoping to inspire students to make healthier food choices.

So far, all nine District 6 elementary schools have signed on for the free program, as have most District 7 and Cube Catholic Elementary in District 3. Program organizers are optimistic more area schools will agree to participate as the school year gets under way.

Healthy Eating Decisions is a collaboration between the psychology departments at Wofford College and University of South Carolina Upstate, led by Wofford psychology professor David Pittman and USC Upstate psychology professor Jennifer Parker. It is intended to combat the surge in childhood obesity rates, and promote lifelong healthy habits.

According to research from the Spartanburg County Childhood Obesity Task Force, more than 40 percent of Spartanburg County elementary students are either overweight or obese.

Under the program, a registered dietitian analyzes daily school lunch menus and identifies the healthiest entrée and side items. Students who choose healthy meals will ring a bell.

Wofford College psychology professor David Pittman talks with students about healthy eating habits last year. The healthy diet efforts will continue this year at many schools.

By LYNN P. BRACKSFORD
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About 150 children from homeless or low-income households received much-needed school supplies and life lessons Saturday afternoon.

The afternoon was filled with speakers, prayer and entertainment as families assisted by Kingdom Outreach — a nondenominational ministry in downtown Spartanburg — gathered at the Spartanburg County Library Headquarters.

Natalie Davis, director of Kingdom Outreach, said for Operation Backpack, the agency partnered with the United Way, churches, restaurants and businesses to provide backpacks filled with supplies the children would need to start school on Monday.

Of the families invited 88 families to Saturday's event based on need and income.

"Without the families, we'd be homeless," Owens said. The Owinges have three children — ages 6, 8 and 10 — and the family had no idea how they were going to pay for school supplies.

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