

ECHO Reaches Out to the Area's Disadvantaged Children and Youth



Back in the day when ECHO was a residential facility, its ministry was directed to the children and youth who called the campus home – regardless of the length of their stay. Since May 2008, when the last of its government funding sources dried up, ECHO has directed its efforts to an externally focused ministry, primarily to the children and youth in the area surrounding its North St. Louis campus. Situated smack in the midst of some of the poorest communities in the metropolitan area, ECHO is seen by many as the extended hand of

Christ in its outreach to the community, offering a variety of programs and resources designed for the betterment of community and its residents.

A new charter school is located on the ECHO campus, where it provides education for its K-2 program. The school opened in 2009, initially offering classes for K-1. In 2010, second grade classes were added, and they will add an additional grade each year up to grade five.

Missouri Area Health Education Centers (AHEC) is a non-for-profit agency established to address the shortage of well-qualified health care workers practicing in medically under-served areas. Through community partnerships with three major area universities, AHEC, working from its office on the ECHO campus, provides academic enrichment, skills building and leadership programs for youth.

In August, ECHO hosted its third annual back-to-school event and equipped 1500 area children with new backpacks filled with school supplies. The backpacks purchase was made possible by a very generous



New backpacks filled with school supplies equipped area children the start of their school year.

donation from QuikTrip Corporation via the Tulsa Community Foundation. Donations from individuals and congregations provided the funds used to purchase the school supplies. The first event, held in 2008, supplied 137 children with back to school essentials. Last year's backpack program equipped 1000 children. With

this kind of exponential growth, we can anticipate providing backpacks for as many as 2000 children in 2011.

In October, ECHO outfitted more than 660 area children with new winter coats. Using additional financial gifts from donors and congregations,

staff purchased the coats using size and gender information received from the parents. Information cards announcing the event were included in the backpacks distributed in August.

ECHO turned the coat distribution event into a fall festival with St. Louis area Disciples congregations participating in the event, staffing booths and offering refreshments, face painting, and new hats, gloves and socks. A local health clinic was also on hand providing free health and dental screenings for the children. A deejay added an extra festive touch with great music.

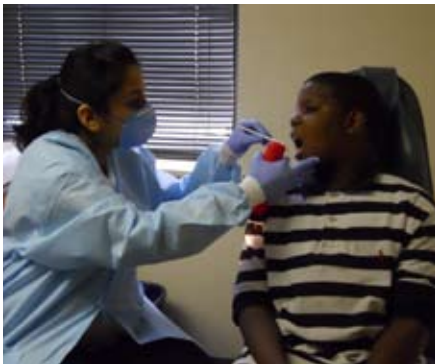


Each coat was purchased with size/gender information supplied by the parent, then bagged and tagged with their name and an ID number.

ECHO has served the St. Louis community continuously since 1889, when it opened its doors as an orphanage. In the years since, the community's needs have many times changed and with each change, ECHO has transformed its programs and services to keep pace with the local needs. Today's needs are, now more than ever, economically driven, and although we cannot predict the future, it's reasonable to assume that these needs will continue and ECHO will be there to help meet for the years to come.



The beautiful park-like setting of the ECHO campus provides the idea location for community events.



Children were offered free dental and health screenings on the day they came to pick up their coats.



An elementary student models her new backpack.



Two of the more than 660 children who received new winter coats in October. The Indian summer day was much too warm to wear a winter coat.

Gibson elementary ^{5th grade} August 8, 2020

Dear Echo/benevolet services,

Thank you for the book bag i really thank u for that it was very nice.

And i thank you for the supplies my favorite color is red like the bookbag and i would like the person who got the bookbags come to the school.

U were nice spending money on people that u don't know so just for doing that God will be with u this is my first year at this school.

you made me think that the school is good already because you gave us the bookbag i just wanted to say thank you and always have positive energy around you.

Sincerely,

To: Eco benevolet Services