

September 26, 2018

Press Release-Request for Immediate Release

United Way of Susquehanna County

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United Way of Susquehanna County Introduces Nurse's Pantry to Susquehanna Community School District

We all should be rightly concerned at a tidbit of information from Susquehanna Community School District Superintendent, Bronson Stone. While answering questions about and acknowledging the need for the new "Nurse's Pantry" initiative launched with help from the United Way of Susquehanna County, Stone noted an increasing number of his school's students come from families deemed "economically disadvantaged."

It's hard to picture a situation in this country, right here in Susquehanna County, where 81% of children under age 5 are at economic risk. Yet the numbers are eye-opening on a broad scale as well.

Mind you, "federal poverty level" is not the same as "economically disadvantaged." But the increase in poverty mirrors an increase in the percent of "economically disadvantaged" students in our area, and the trend needs to be reversed.

"The Nurse's Pantry is an effort to help do just that, by applying a relatively small amount of money — \$1,000 from the United Way of Susquehanna County — at a leverage point where it can have the most impact.", said Kim Merithew, United Way of Susquehanna County (UWSC), Director of Corporate and Community Giving. In this case, United Way saw how many day's' low-income students miss class and parents miss work for easily-fixed problems like too few shirts or pants, lack of hygiene products or lice treatment shampoo. Thanks to our generous donors, UWSC is able to fund programs like this.

Fix those problems as soon as they arise, the reasoning goes, and you reduce the amount of lost school time and work time for the parents or guardian. Keep the kids in school so they don't start falling behind, and you increase their academic success, their chances to graduate, and ultimately their chance to break out of the cycle of poverty that so often inflicts low-income children.

That's been the objective of United Way's "Helping Children Do Well" initiative launched four years ago, after an extensive review of resources and priorities. The point of best leverage has always been helping children avoid the failures and shortcomings that poverty evokes, by providing support in education, health support and financial stability.

The initiative has routinely looked for programs that have lasting impact, like the affiliation with Dolly Parton's Imagination Library or the "Real Men Read" effort.

The Nurse's Pantry is just the latest in United Way of Susquehanna County's long-term initiative. Only time will tell if helping grade school students deal with lice and a lack of clean clothes improves academics and lowers our area's poverty rate, but it is a smart, economical approach to the bigger issue, and one part of a solution to a persistent problem.



Pictured left to right: School Nurse, Elizabeth Mattis, School Superintendent, Bronson Stone

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