

John Evans teacher teacher on a mission to help hungry students

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Sixth-grade teacher Niki Quinby tells Terry Davis of Journey Christian Church where to drop off bags of food for John Evans Middle School students in need Thursday afternoon in Greeley. The school gives approximately 50 students a bag of food containing a can of vegetables, one box of toaster pastries, a family size can of soup, one box of macaroni and cheese, and Ramen noodles.
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Niki Quinby refused to believe that everyone was too strapped to help.

To prove how easy it could be, she went to Walmart and bought Pop Tarts, a family size can of soup, two packages of Ramen noodles, a can of vegetables and macaroni and cheese.

The grand total – \$4.88.

This is Quinby's first year teaching at John Evans Middle School. In late November, the school was informed that Dream Team – a program that helps feed families over weekends – would only be able to sponsor six families from John Evans.

Out of 628 students at the school, 82 percent of them qualify for free and reduced lunch, which guarantees them two meals at school each day. However, this does not provide food for the weekend.

Quinby wanted to do something.

In December, she contacted the Weld Food Bank, and in the second week of January, she was able to get 25 families added to the list of six. But there were still too many families going hungry on the weekend.

Then she took her Walmart bag full of food to Journey Christian Church and put it on Arron Chambers' desk. She asked the pastor for help from the church to ultimately feed 50 families on the weekends.

The church members responded – 70 people signed up to sponsor 50 families at \$5 a week.

"Niki just put the school on my radar," Chambers said.

Quinby and the John Evans staff were overwhelmed when the church made their first delivery last month. At the time, they were storing food in the principal's office, and the members of Journey completely filled it.

Now, every Thursday, the folks at Journey load up the food and deliver it to John Evans, where it is then kept in a pantry downstairs. The cupboards are so full, bags overflow the counters.

To Quinby, this is proof. The community still gives back.

"I truly believe John Evans is a place to be inspired," Quinby said through tears.

Journey has inspired her to give without expectation, and she is teaching her kids the same values.

Quinby says although there is the stigma of lower-class schools, these kids truly believe they can change the world.

For example, the students themselves raised \$200 dollars to send to Pakistan to help two kids go to school. Now, according to Quinby, they want to clean up the neighborhood around the school – this includes pulling weeds.

Although the students don't know where the food is coming from, they understand the impact.

The members of Journey will at least continue their efforts until the end of the school year, but Chambers hopes the church can sponsor the school for a long time.

Chambers is already thinking about providing tutors and dental care for the students.

Ultimately, if it hadn't been for Quinby's refusal to accept "no" for an answer, this would have never happened, according to Chambers.

"What an amazing blessing that girl is to that school," he said.

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