

Email from DE. Suzette Nolan, Principal of Avalon Elementary School to Unity in the Community

Greetings: I was just thinking about our Avalon Angels. I hope all is well on your part of the cloud.

Regarding our uniforms: Uniforms Unlimited has been a wonderful company with which to work. We received our first half order last April 2009 followed by the remainder of the order on December 8, 2009. Because of the economy, the needs of our families have been higher than expected this year. We have a few sizes remaining on our shelves, but have depleted most of our stock. We have \$1,830 remaining in our Unity Church account and will use this money to purchase one last order from Uniforms Unlimited that will carry us to June 10, the last student school day.

Needs for next year: At this time, we anticipate maintaining our current student numbers for next year. That number is 472. Our major and most critical need is for uniforms followed by school supplies (basic supplies such as crayons, glue, markers, pencils, paper). Coming in as a close third would be toiletries (deodorant, shampoo, toothbrushes, toothpaste). We use the toiletries for our fourth and fifth grade students. We distribute when we present the curriculum on Human Growth & Development.

Rationale for the need for support from Unity Church: The economy has affected so many of our parents. Many have lost their jobs or have had work hours reduced. They are working longer hours for less pay and often working 2-3 jobs to make ends meet. We continue to maintain our 91%-92% of our families falling in the "poverty" category. In addition, almost 75% of our parents do not speak English. Avalon represents a safe haven for our children. They can always get a warm meal, will receive proper uniform clothing if their parents cannot purchase, will participate in a first class education administered by our teachers, and will always, always, feel love and respect. Many of our teachers provide after school tutoring for their students for no pay.

Another dire statistic is our homeless rate. At this time, 12% of our students are homeless. They live in the Women's Shelter. That's a lot of baggage to carry around when you're 10 or younger. Also, the tragedy in Haiti affected us as well. We currently have 5 students who are refugees. They were able to make it to America and are living with their Haitian Creole relatives. These children lost close family members and had no other option but to migrate to America. They're learning the culture as well as the language. I don't want to be overly dramatic, but when we give them clothing and a backpack filled with school supplies, they look at us in confusion. We have to make them understand these are gifts for them. They are always overwhelmed and we get big tears and/or big smiles. As a school, our teachers and staff have collected money for these children and their families. The needs continue to exist. Continue to grow.

I could keep going, but that's an overview of our daily issues/concerns/needs. The Unity Church is our beacon of light. Everything you give us goes directly into the community. Nothing's wasted, everything is appreciated. We share with our families the fact that the Unity Church is our benefactor. I know you're in their prayers...you're in ours as well.

All the best to you,
Suzette