

THE TIMES


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Families fill Indian Trails for sock hops on the lawn

By Garth Snow
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Barbara Krisher introduced the free concert with a free civics lesson.

Indian Trails Park is a township park, said the Aboite Township trustee. "This is not a city park and this is not a county park," she said. "This is a township park and the township pays with their tax dollars for the maintenance and improvements of the park."

She said many individuals and groups worked to create the park. "In 2000 this was in beans and the

grapevine was talking about the builder who was going to put 350 houses on this 80 acres," she said. "The [township] advisory board and I had for some time been watching this land and talking about making a park here, because it's almost in the center of the township and we felt it would be a great location. You don't just go out and buy a piece of property with public money. You have to get appraisals — more than one — and you have to compare them."

Over the years, the

pavilion, parking lots and restrooms were added. The playground was completed. A 13-acre section was sold to become the home of the Jorgensen YWCA.

Today, an assortment of athletic leagues use the park. Radio-control airplanes soar over the park and set down on the south parking lot. The pavilion is available for rent for \$50 for a half-day. For details or to reserve the pavilion, call Krisher at (260) 432-0970.

The free concerts also

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PHOTO BY GARTH SNOW

Wayne Neukom of The Bulldogs warms up as Aboite Township Trustee Barbara Krisher prepares to introduce a Concert on the Green at Indian Trails Park.

1,000 kids get backpacks to start school year right

By Garth Snow
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Lifeline Youth & Family Services Inc. is easing the back-to-school worries for hundreds of children. Staff and volunteers visited The Chapel to pick up 350 backpacks stuffed with supplies.

Church members bought, filled and donated 1,000 backpacks in all, to be

distributed to at-risk kids through four agencies.

Families at Brookmill Court apartments picked up their backpacks from Lifeline at an Aug. 6 cookout.

"We have a big cookout and every family from the Brookmill community comes, and we hand the backpacks to each individual student. Each backpack has been

assigned," said Jacquie Downey, the vice president of marketing for Lifeline. "The parents are 90 percent single mothers. So they have to choose between paying the utility bill, putting food on the table, or buying school supplies. So we are able to help them take one thing off their plate.

"The excitement level on

the students' faces is just wonderful, knowing that 'I have a backpack.'"

Lifeline operates a preschool at the apartment complex near Covington Road and Brooklyn Avenue, in the community surrounding Study School and Study Park. "All the children from preschool to seniors in high school will get backpacks," Downey

said.

Lifeline also distributes backpacks through Spencer House and the Euell A. Wilson Center.

Downey said The Chapel reached out with the offer of backpacks. Congregants were invited to pick up backpack requests. "It was offered during their weekend service, and every

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PHOTO BY GARTH SNOW

Each donated backpack bears the first name of the child who will receive it. The shopping list is specific to the student's grade level.

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single ticket was picked up, which was just unbelievable the generosity," Downey said.

The outreach began several years ago. "Some of the congregants shop in advance and save school supplies awaiting our requests so they can stuff the backpacks to capacity," Bernice Lush, Lifeline's Project Incentive director at Brookmill Courts, said

in a statement. "Others will bring their children to help choose the name of one of our children to give a backpack and school supplies. I love that the adults are giving and teaching their children to give."

The Chapel, 2505 W. Hamilton Road S., Fort Wayne, also distributes backpacks through Southwest Allen County Schools and the Southeast YMCA.

"And a team from The

Chapel is in southern Alabama at the third-poorest school district in the country, and we provide backpacks for them," said Rich Hawks, church pastor. "One of the most meaningful statements of Jesus was, 'Let the little children come to me, for such is the Kingdom of Heaven.' And we highly value children here, and we want to make sure that when they start school, they don't start off disadvantaged. So we provide backpacks with all their school supplies in them so when the first day of school comes they're proud and ready to go.

"Each backpack was purchased by somebody as a volunteer. We announce it on Sunday morning, people pick up a student's name and needs, fill the backpack, bring it back, and out the door it goes. They're given a supply list so they know that this is a fifth-grade boy. That way they don't give him a

Barbie backpack." While in Notasulga, Ala., the team also is painting, building a retaining wall, and making other repairs to the K-12 school.

Hawks said the backpack campaign began perhaps 10 years ago. "But I'm sure that before The Chapel was ever started there were churches giving backpacks," he said.

He said the backpacks represent only one piece of the church's relationship with the children. He cited studies showing that children who do not read during the summer can lose a half-year of learning. "So along with the backpacks, The Chapel funds a summer reading club for at-risk kids, and what we have found is that those kids come back from summer half a grade ahead instead of half a year behind," he said.

The faculty travel to two apartment complexes near Covington Elementary



PHOTO BY GARTH SNOW

Gabi Carpenter arranges backpacks in the lobby of The Chapel, where a Lifeline team picked up the gifts for the Brookmill Court community. Gabi is in the seventh grade at Central Lutheran School.

school. "That way the kids don't have to walk a mile to get here," Hawks said.

Lifeline offers programming for children and families in the courts system. In 2012, the

agency added Crosswinds to serve other families in crisis.

For more information, visit lifelineyouth.org, crosswindseyouth.org, or thechapel.net.

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