

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

GOODNESS NOW INCREASES NUMBER OF STUDENTS BY 42% & DELIVERS 10,000 MEAL

Middletown, NJ 2/2/2016 Goodness Now, an organization committed to combating hunger for elementary school children in Monmouth County, NJ, announced today that it is expanding the number of children & families it serves each weekend from 35 to 50. Each week students take home a backpack that consists of 2 dinners, 2 lunches and 2 breakfast meals to provide weekend nourishment for themselves and family members. In January, the program which started in 2014, delivered its 10,000 meal.

Goodness Now was started by high school students Maddy & Andrew Denton in partnership with Middletown United Methodist Church to provide weekend meals for local school children who depend on free or reduced school lunches as their main source of nourishment. On weekends, or when school is out, these children are challenged to get nutrition and that is where Goodness Now fills the gap. In September 2014, Goodness Now partnered with a Monmouth County Elementary school to initially provide weekend meals for 20 students. These meals are packed twice a month by the church youth group and delivered to the school each week by the ladies auxiliary. Backpacks are discretely delivered to the school classrooms for the students to take home for the weekend. Since its inception the program has been steadily growing each semester in students enrolled in the program, amount of food in each bag, and the number of volunteers helping each week.

Connecting in the local community is critical for Middletown United Methodist Church & Goodness Now. "When we started the program, we stepped out in faith and committed to help 20 children weekly. It's been amazing to grow the program and make it possible to deliver even more goodness. Our church is deeply rooted in this community and Goodness Now is just one of many ministries we are committed to locally. The problem of child hunger is real, and it exists right here in Monmouth County", said Pastor Derrick Doherty, Middletown United Methodist Church.

"We've been fortunate that our message and cause is important in our local community and because of that we have been able to really grow the program. Last year we got a big boost with a grant from eBay, and that allowed us to really think about what was possible with the program. So we started adding families, increased our budget per bag to \$7.00 and added volunteers. Right now we are delivering 300 meals each weekend, there are about 30 people involved, and we just packed our 10,000 meal. The support of our church and youth group is critical to making this work." said Andrew Denton from Goodness Now.

In the state of NJ there are over 400,000 children who depend on free or reduced lunches as their primary source of nutrition. According to state statistics, over 7500 students qualify for the program in

Monmouth County. In the elementary school that is partnered with Goodness Now, over 100 students are eligible for the program. Goodness Now is committed to providing meals for each student who qualifies and is dedicated to making that goal by the end of 2016.

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