

Lakota Local Schools has a rich history in supporting those in need, not only in our community, but outside of Butler County and Ohio as well. This was evident recently as schools across the district collected items to assist the victims of Hurricane Harvey. From the high schools down to the early childhood schools, our students came forward to help. Isabella Johnson, a second grader at Cherokee Elementary School, went door to door in her neighborhood to request donations and was able to fill her mom's SUV with items. At Lakota East High School, the drive for donations was tagged "Hoops for Houston." Led by the men's basketball team, in partnership with 40:31 Ministries, the team challenged the East community to help fill 100 boxes with clothing and bedding items. A box-packing event featured a presentation about "Leading Courageously," led by NFL Hall of Famer Anthony Munoz. Lakota West High School's principal, Elgin Card, started a movement with a single tweet that resulted in the collection of thousands of t-shirts and shoes. Between the big push at West's home football game, donation bins lining Main Street, and even large donations coming in from alumni like Philadelphia Eagles linebacker Jordan Hicks, the final shipment was impressive in size. Students also partnered with the Center for School-Based Mental Health Programs at Miami University to write letters of encouragement to their peers in the hurricane zone.

The district's annual food drive to assist Reach Out Lakota will kick off on September 29th at the East versus West football game. In the past, there has been a friendly competition between the East and West sides of the district. This year, in the spirit of "WE are Lakota," we are all coming together to support this wonderful organization. The community is able to lend their support as well. Donations will be accepted at the September 29th football game at Lakota West High School and at both high schools during their October 27th games. This district wide food drive is the single largest source of donations for Reach Out Lakota. In fact, over 60% of the West Chester/Liberty food pantry's donations come from drives sponsored by Lakota schools.

As educators, it is our responsibility to ensure our students are prepared for their next step after walking across the stage at graduation. For some, that may be continuing their education or enlisting in the armed forces. Other students may begin their lives after high school employed. One of the goals of our Career Readiness Academy is to teach the life skills students will need to succeed as they strive for excellence in their lives. The Dress for Success Tie Project is part of this initiative. Recently, special guests from across the district volunteered to teach the students how to tie a tie, a life skill that they will use in their quest for future success, including being prepared for job interviews. The 100 students who participated embraced the project, with both the students and special guests enjoying the experience.

If you weren't able to make it to our first coffee chat earlier this month, I hope that you will be able to attend the next one on October 4th at Coffee Beans & Brew from 2-3 PM. It is an opportunity for us to talk and for me to listen to your thoughts and answer your questions about this great school district.

Matt Miller is the superintendent of Lakota Local Schools. Follow him on Twitter @LakotaSuper and FaceBook Matt Miller – Lakota Local Schools Superintendent.