



Operation Give Hope Rockcastle Association Offers Hope while Meeting Needs

What can unite 15-17 churches in a Baptist association, Celebrate Recovery participants, a Christian church, Catholic Church, local school system, plus a variety of other groups and individuals? Ask Teresa Parrett, Missions Mobilization Coordinator for the Kentucky Baptist Convention, and Katheryn Pope. They can tell you all about Operation Give Hope, sponsored by the Rockcastle Baptist Association and coordinated by Katheryn, a Mission Service Corps Missionary. They hold the event in a middle school cafeteria and gymnasium. Celebrate Recovery participants give testimonies. Individuals and groups sing. They serve food and give away backpacks, toys, coats, and blankets to children in need.



Director of Missions, Randy McPherson, had a vision for a county-wide event where every child would be ministered to and receive a new toy. Operation Give Hope was born and has grown every year.

One of many **Christmas Backpack Project** events, Rockcastle Association has it down to an art. However, Teresa and Katheryn will also tell about the tremendous amount of work required. As Katheryn said, "Even though I know God's got this, the enormity of it all overwhelms me at times." Katheryn was commissioned as a MSC Missionary in April, 2015 but her work actually began in 2011. She led 15 people from Rockcastle Association on a mission trip to Romania. After their trip, they recognized the local need for outreach events similar to those they did abroad. They formed a Community Mission Team with Katheryn as coordinator. They have done a variety of outreach projects including several backyard Vacation Bible Schools and winter soup kitchens, as well as Operation Give Hope, initially called "Love in a Box."

In the last two years, Rockcastle association has served approximately 1,500 children with Christmas backpacks, coats, blankets, and toys. They have also seen many decisions for

Christ. Other events Katheryn coordinates at the Community Outreach Center in Brodhead include the Summer Feeding for Kids, Celebrate Recovery, Back to School Bash, women's Bible studies, and Feeding the Flock Food Pantry.



What is the Backpack Project?

- The Christmas Backpack Project began in 2001 by a GA Leader with North Lanier Baptist Church in Georgia. They prepared shoe boxes for children in need.
- In 2012 the project changed to backpacks rather than shoe boxes to distinguish their program from Samaritan's Purse.
- Bill Barker, former Director of Appalachian Regional Ministry, and now with Appalachian Mountain Ministry and Georgia Baptist Convention, was instrumental in spreading the backpack project across the Appalachian Regional Ministry and Mississippi River Ministry areas.
- Along with backpacks filled with necessities, gifts, and goodies, children receive a copy of the Christmas story. They can also join the Mailbox club, an age-appropriate Bible study by mail.
- In 2016, 2,144 churches distributed 53,589 Christmas backpacks. They saw 1,531 salvation decisions made. The 2017 goal was 65,000 backpacks.

Although Operation Give Hope consumes tremendous amounts of time and energy, Teresa and Katheryn love it. The smiles on children's faces, gratitude of parents, and cooperative efforts among the churches and missionaries make all their work worthwhile. Katheryn said, "Nothing surpasses the joy of knowing people are getting saved because of our efforts."

If you want to help with Operation Give Hope, needs include new toys and new and gently used blankets and coats. You can contact Kathryn Pope at 606-308-3099 or the Rockcastle Baptist Association office at 606-256-4571.

You can also participate in the **2018 Kentucky Christmas Backpacks Project** by collecting backpacks filled with requested items. Use your state missions emphasis as a kick-off time for the project with all backpacks collected by the end of September. Visit the Kentucky Baptist Backpack Project web page for information on collection sites.

As you share the Backpack Project in your church, please pray for each ministry which will distribute the backpacks and share the gospel. As Katheryn said, "The greatest thing anyone can do for the backpack ministry is pray."

Prayer Requests:

- * Pray that children and adults hear the gospel, the true meaning of Christmas.
- * Pray that many accept the Christ of Christmas as their personal Savior and Lord.
- * Pray that God will be glorified.

Go Further

Will you:

- *Pray?
- *Participate?
- *Partner?

Visit the Christmas Backpacks Project web page, download all needed information, and start planning how your church will participate.

www.kybaptist.org/backpacks



Kentucky's Backpack Project

- Kentucky's first statewide Backpack Project began in 2017 as a partnership with the North American Mission Board and Kentucky Woman's Missionary Union. Churches, associations, and other ministries host backpack outreach events.
- With the retirement of Bill Barker from NAMB, we now partner with Appalachian Mountain Ministry and the Georgia Baptist Convention in the Christmas Backpack Project.
- Activities at the Backpack Project sites may be as simple as a birthday party for Jesus with cake, punch, the Christmas story, and backpack distribution. Larger ones include Cedaridge Ministry's in Williamsburg that reached 2,000 children and families.
- Teresa Parrett is the Kentucky Baptist representative for Appalachian Regional Ministry and Mississippi River Ministry.
- In February Teresa sends backpack applications to churches, associations, and ministries that reach out to needy families and children in Kentucky. She forwards completed applications to Bill Barker who matches churches filling backpacks with those requesting them.
- With a 2017 goal of 5,000 backpacks, Kentucky Baptists collected over 8,000. The goal for 2018 is 10,000!.
- Backpacks must be delivered to associational collection sites between October 15-19, 2018.
- Be sure to read the new instructions for 2018.