Firefighters team up with United Way to fill backpacks for kindergartners

By Dylan Sinn dsinn@heraldt.com | Posted: Wednesday, May 27, 2015 12:00 am

Templeton Elementary School played host Tuesday to a firetruck, a handful of Bloomington Fire Department firefighters, a group of United Way of Monroe County representatives and about a dozen giddy Templeton students.

The children stayed still long enough for photographers to take photos of the entire group, firetruck and all, to mark the kickoff of the Kindergarten Countdown Supply Drive.

The supply drive is a monthlong event aiming to gather school supplies for underprivileged children. BFD will host drives at all five of its fire stations in support of the United Way event. The organizations’ goal is to fill 25 backpacks for kids during the month of June.

While the firefighters mingled with the wide-eyed children, United Way representatives took time to express their excitement about their organization’s partnership with the fire department.

“With the fire department, it looks like we’re not only going to be able to fill the 25 backpacks for the Kindergarten Countdown kids, but then also fill the need for the MCCSC social workers who have a large outreach in the community,” United Way community initiatives assistant director Ashley Schoolman said. “We’ll be able to find those other kids who are struggling to find all the supplies they need.”

United Way has hosted Kindergarten Countdown — a low-cost summer camp that helps at-risk children be ready for kindergarten learning — for the past five years, but this is the first time it has partnered with the fire department for the supply drive.

“The city of Bloomington Fire Department is excited to partner with the United Way of Monroe County by providing our fire stations as drop-off points,” Fire Chief Todd Easton said in a news release from the City of Bloomington. “Hopefully by opening the doors to the five City of Bloomington fire stations, this will provide easy access for the citizens of Monroe County to
participate in this program.”

The firefighters who attended the kickoff event at Templeton had a good time as well, joking with the children and posing with a sign reading “Kindergarten Supply Drive.”

“We love getting out in the community like that,” firefighter Kane King said as he drove the truck away after the event.

Donations for the Supply Drive are due July 1. Go to www.monrounitedway.org/KCDsupplies for information about the kind of supplies being collected.
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