

# Decatur UMC reaches out to community, Offers free meal every Friday plus backpacks full of food

*Martha Jacob, Brown County Press Staff  
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More than 1,400 people have been helped by the Decatur Food Bank since Annie Staggs first opened its doors about a year and a half ago.

The small community of Decatur has been hit hard by the recession and the closing of the Airborne Park in Wilmington.

"It was really tough for a lot of families here in Decatur," Staggs said. "But this community has pulled together to help each other out.



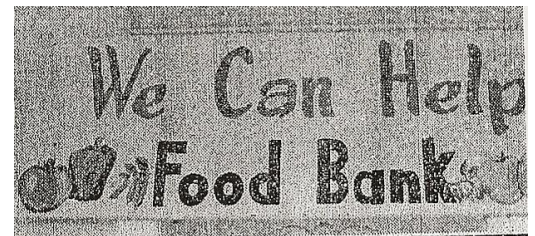
"Since opening the food bank, we have never run out of food. These people are loving and generous beyond belief. And the United Methodist Church gives us money to buy food, as does several other organizations.

"The Lady Warriors from Eastern High School donated \$500 to the food bank, which was appreciated so much."

Staggs said the food bank serves residents from both Adams and Brown counties. The doors to the food bank are only open on Fridays and helps 20 to 30 people every Friday.

But the food bank is only one way Decatur residents are helping each other during these difficult times. The congregation at the United Methodist Church in Decatur is also helping the community.

Pastor of the church Stephen Hahn and his wife Janet are spear-heading a way to help feed children in the area. While vacationing in Hilton Head recently, Pastor Hahn was introduced to the "Backpack Buddies" program which supplies two days of food (Saturday and Sunday) to elementary age school children. "Over half the children in our school district receive free or reduced cost lunches," Pastor Hahn explained. "That's a lot of children. And that made me wonder what they eat on the week-ends.



"When I saw what a good program this Backpack Buddies has worked out in other areas I felt it was just what we needed here."

The original Backpack Buddies, Inc., funded solely by donations, started in Texas a couple years ago and continues to grow across America.

The Decatur United Methodist Church started passing out its first backpack's full of nutritious food a week ago. "On Fridays now, between 6 and 8 p.m. we are offering a free meal in the basement of the church to anyone who wants to join us," Pastor Hahn added.

"And families with elementary school age children can pick up a backpack for their child and take home with them for the weekend.

"We are excited about this opportunity to help these children, and we at the Methodist Church are privileged to offer this service."

If anyone is interested in helping with these efforts and would like to make a donation or volunteer their time, Pastor Hahn can be reached at (513) 535-0720.