Red Bird Mission Assisting Flood Victims

Red Bird Mission was spared from the devastating flooding in eastern Kentucky in late July, but resources on hand went out immediately to shelters and distribution points before the flood waters receded.

- On Friday morning, July 29th, Penny Gray and Kayla Collett, Red Bird Dental Clinic staff, loaded up a minivan containing food, clothing, and personal hygiene supplies to help victims arriving at the designated shelter in Perry County.
- Leslie Hensley, Red Bird Christian School 2nd Grade teacher, was back in the devastation in her family’s home area of Letcher County. She joined her family distributing hundreds of meals daily to victims. By Saturday, teacher colleagues joined her bringing needed supplies.
- Staff administrators for Red Bird’s social media pages began reposting info regarding available shelters, resources and needs. Red Bird Mission’s online donation form added a special fund for monetary donations to be used exclusively for flood relief.

Red Bird Mission continues to work with responders.


Leonard Lawson (Class of 1958) demonstrated his love and appreciation for Red Bird School through his actions. When the board of directors closed Red Bird Mission School in May 2010 until sufficient funds were available to reopen, Leonard answered the call from Dr. Taylor Collins (66), newly hired Red Bird Mission Executive Director. Leonard’s commitment to give significantly for five years along with Taylor’s tightened budget for the 2010-11 school year convinced the board to vote for re-opening just weeks after they had voted closure.

Leonard continued to lead in giving and inspired others to give to Red Bird School in 2013 when he and his wife, Bonnie (’58) challenged friends and business associates to give over $180,000 for a major renovation of the girls dormitory. In 2014, Leonard committed to match dollar for dollar each donation given for Red Bird School at the annual Red Bird School Alumni Association Homecoming in an effort to put the school on more stable financial ground. With Leonard’s matching gifts added to donations from others, over $300,000 was raised that year with a significant donation made to establish a Red Bird School Endowment Fund.

Leonard and Bonnie Lawson receive special alumni recognition in 2012.

New Dental Imaging and 3-D Printing Serves More

The dental needs existing in southeastern Kentucky far exceed the financial resources of the residents. Most can’t afford dental insurance and the Medicaid coverage essentially covers basic services. Whip Mix Corporation based in Louisville, Kentucky, has become a strong partner providing equipment and materials needed that the Red Bird Dental Clinic needs to address the dental health crisis.

The company that manufactures products and technology for dental health recently provided the dental clinic with a $30,000 intraoral scanner plus resin and the program to print crowns using 3-D printing technology.

“This will help the people in our area because it will reduce the cost for a crown [for those without insurance],” said Dr. Bill Collins, director of the dental clinic.

Also new to the dental clinic is a Cone Beam Computed Tomography machine, (pictured here) which works like an MRI machine. A patient stands at the machine while it slowly moves around the person, making 150-200 scans a minute at various angles.

“What that gives us is a 3D image of the patient’s mouth,” Dr. Collins said. “That way we can get a better image of what could be a cyst or cancerous growth.”

For more information about the dental clinic programs, please call (606) 598-5138 or visit www.rbmission.org.

Ways to Support

Secure online donations—www.rbmission.org/donate
Donations by phone — 888-726-3459 (toll free)
Donations by bank transfer — 888-726-3459 (toll free)
Copy paper, pocket folders and mechanical pencils for school

Furniture and household items
Make RB Mission or RB Clinic your Amazon Smile charity

For more complete listings of needs, click “Ways to Support” on our home page.
Baccalaureate returns to roots

Graduates of Red Bird Christian School once again, after a two-year absence, attended the baccalaureate ceremony at Beverly United Methodist Church on May 22.

The event concluded the 100th year celebration for Red Bird on the campus of the original school. The graduation ceremony was held at the current school site.

Smiles and hugs were plentiful as friends and family filled the church for the baccalaureate. John Lundy, science teacher, said he was honored to give the message this year. The highlight of the occasion was all current and former choir members joining to sing "He That Believeth," one of the Cardinal Singers’ standards.

During commencement, Sandi Curt, Promise Zone Coordinator and Red Bird Mission Board member, was the keynote speaker. She gave the graduates pearls of wisdom similar to ones her father wrote down for her when she graduated.

Eleven graduates took part in the ceremony.


Kindergartners celebrate year with graduation

Kindergarten graduation was a grand occasion with songs, prayers, Bible verse recitation and honors bestowed on the participants. Red Bird “pride” was flowing that day among family and community members celebrating the completion of the first year of school.

Eleven graduates took part in the ceremony. Colton Mosley and Madalyn Smith opened and closed, respectively, the program with prayers. Syrus Stone and Charlie Sizemore led the reciting of Bible verses. Gabriel Caldwell led the pledge of allegiance to the U.S. flag while Amica Eversole did so to the Christian flag. A poem was read by Hayden Brock, Jaelyn Jackson, Finley Smith, Marlee Barrett and Kayson Couch.

Their teacher, Mrs. Marsha Roark, will be taking a break this year to assist with an new grandchild that arrived this summer. Another Red Bird former teacher, Ms. Debbie Collins Napier, will be stepping in to give the new Kindergarten class a superb foundation for learning.

Lawson Legacy continued a dream that Dr. Taylor Collins saw as a means of securing the school for future generations.

Leonard addressed the alumni gathering in his usual, humble fashion that year after the unveiling of a sign designating the school campus as The Bonnie and Leonard Lawson Campus. Even though he and Bonnie could be counted as the largest donors in school history, he challenged all present that day to ask others to help support the school. Recognizing that no one person or entity could support the needs of Red Bird School, he said, “It takes all of us.”

Mrs. Kari Collins, Executive Director, spoke at Leonard’s memorial service where state and national politicians and leaders were present. She shared that although Leonard was nine years older than Taylor, “…they both shared a common passion for Red Bird and a desire to make a difference in the lives of mountain people…Leonard said he received a college education while attending high school at Red Bird, and others agreed. Red Bird helped them see the possibilities of a promising future…”

Lawson Legacy

Bonnie and Leonard Lawson Campus

Baccalaureate

100 + 1 = 2022 RBSAA Homecoming

Last year, leadership of the Red Bird School Alumni Association and Red Bird Mission concluded that the centennial celebrations for Red Bird School should be postponed due to the increase of COVID spread just weeks before the annual October reunion. After making the decision in a video conference, one of the representatives of the Class of 1971 said, “We think we should just have a 100 plus 1 next year!”

Planning is now underway to do just that. Although there has been devastating flooding in the region and the start of classes at Red Bird Christian School was postponed until August 18 due to maintenance issues at the school, leadership expects to reboot plans that were shelved last September. Last year’s successful fundraising of more than $200,000 has already inspired alumni and friends