

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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LOGAN BYERS SKIPS BIRTHDAY PRESENTS TO HELP OTHERS

HICKORY – Most 11-year-old boys eagerly anticipate birthday gifts of video games, clothing, or sports equipment. But when Logan Byers recently celebrated his 12th birthday, he was looking for gifts of food donations for the Backpack Program, which helps local children in need.

In all, he collected about 340 pounds of food from his birthday party guests in July. What makes this story even more unusual is that Logan has had the same birthday wish for the past five years. He is the son of George Byers, retired deputy chief of the Hickory Fire Department, and Terri Byers, fire education coordinator at the department. So maybe it's only natural that he would have a strong desire to help others.

The idea originated when Logan was 7 years old. He became very upset by a television commercial about abused and starving pets. His mother discussed the ad with him, pointing out that not only animals need help, but so do some children in their own county. Since his birthday was approaching, Logan said he wanted to ask his guests to bring food that could be given to needy children.

“I don’t want people to starve,” he said. “I want people to live a happy life.” Although he admits he likes presents as much as anyone else, he said his parents helped him realize that he already has everything he needs. “I didn’t want to be greedy,” he said.



Logan Byers with his parents, Terri and George. He collected about 340 pounds of food when he asked guests at his birthday party to bring food for the Backpack Program instead of gifts for him.

Each year, his parents have a themed birthday party for him at Winkler Park. Relatives, friends and neighbors enjoy the event while also helping Catawba County children. Some years, they also brought food for pets, which Logan donated to the Catawba County Humane Society.

Logan is a rising seventh grader who will attend Jacob's Fork Middle School this fall. Although he hasn't yet decided what kind of career he wants, he is leaning toward being an inventor or a house designer. He enjoys playing video games that focus on building, planning and designing. He recently attended a camp at the Catawba Science Center where he learned to build things using different kinds of video games.

"He's always designing and building, and taking care of others," said his father. "He's our technology guru." He said he is proud of his son for wanting to make the world a better place. His mother added, "It's very generous of Logan to do this, but it's also generous of all the people who come to the party."

The Backpack Program is a community-supported program that is coordinated by Amanda Freeland, a social worker with Catawba County Social Services. This program provides weekend packages of food during the school year for children facing food insecurity. It operates in all of the county's elementary schools as well as some middle schools, high schools and child development centers. In the 2015-2016 school year, the Backpack Program distributed 398,931 meals to 1,392 children.

"Citizens of our county make this program happen, and each year it's been amazing to see new partners come on board to donate funds or food to help us continue to serve children," Freeland said. "Having donors that are children such as Logan and a few others who have done the same at their birthday parties is a really special gift; it's a reminder that we can all do something to better the lives of someone else. I'm just in awe each year of the number of generous children who choose to support Backpack Program and serve their peers with their time, talent, and treasure."

For more information about how you, your church, club, or business can help, contact Amanda Freeland at afreeland@catawbacountync.gov.

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