

Fledgling program on the grow S.O.S. aids more children

The school doors are open throughout the CRDC service area as thousands of children returned to their classrooms in August. Many students who might have faced the challenge of starting school without adequate supplies received help again this year from the Supply Our Schools (S.O.S.) program.

Thanks to the generosity of numerous businesses, organizations and individuals, CRDC's S.O.S. efforts were able to aid hundreds of lower income youngsters.

Human Services department personnel were busy in the eight-county service area collecting funds, purchasing supplies, and distributing the school materials to those children who had been registered and approved for assistance.

While final totals are not complete, the final count of students served this year is expected to greatly exceed the number aided in last year's effort.

KAIT-TV in Jonesboro is the original partner in the S.O.S. campaign with CRDC and the television station continued to provide heavy promotional support. Of course, a large number of TV personalities and their behind-the-camera comrades were on hand for the big car wash fund raiser.

Elephant Car Wash in Jonesboro and

Best Stop Car Wash in Paragould donated a portion of the fees charged for washing cars throughout one Saturday in July. KAIT was on hand doing regular "live" broadcasts from the two locations throughout the day.

Nearly \$3,000 was raised as a result of the soapy goings-on at the two car wash facilities. This figure was from car wash fees, cash donations and donated school supplies.

The Supply Our Schools program received a big financial boost this year from the state's largest utility company, Entergy Arkansas. David Burnette, a customer service manager for Entergy Arkansas in Northeast Arkansas, presented a check for \$5,000 on behalf of the electric energy supplier to Robert Wilford, executive director of CRDC, during the Back to School Bash in Jonesboro.

"We are most grateful to David and Entergy Arkansas for this gift," Wilford said following the presentation. "I am happy to accept the cash donation on behalf of CRDC and children in need throughout our eight county service area in Northeast Arkansas."

Burnette emphasized that "the program is just incredible and Entergy is very excited to be a participant in this year's effort."

He added, "I am hopeful this money

will go a long way in providing added supplies for distribution to low-income children throughout the Northeast Arkansas counties served by CRDC and Entergy. We're proud to participate in this very worthy cause."

"We will put these funds to good use," Wilford emphasized. "There are large numbers of children who are in need of these supplies and we are doing our very best to reach out to them. Personally and as executive director of CRDC, I want to say 'thank you' to Entergy for this very welcome and needed gift."

The executive director also voiced his appreciation to the Walmart stores in our service area and to ARKids for their unselfish efforts and to all who have contributed to the S.O.S. program and to the staff and volunteers who have worked so hard to raise funds, collect supplies, register applicable students and distribute the supplies to those in need.

"This program," Wilford said, "is an excellent example of what CRDC is all about and what can be accomplished when we all work together toward a common goal. We are extremely grateful for the kindness and generosity shown by everyone throughout our service area. Together, we're making a difference."



The numbers of recipients of S.O.S. school supplies was up this year as were the available services to the youngsters. Volunteers from programs throughout the area were on hand to provide services ranging from nutritional aid to dental exams at the S.O.S. Bash.