



## **Summer program sustains youngsters' bodies, brains**

By DANALINE BRYANT

Messenger staff writer

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Each weekday brings an example of how a community can come together to create something good for children.

That's how Executive Director Keith Wasserman described the assistance given to Good Works Inc.'s Summer Lunch Program and Kids Discovery Club.

The Summer Lunch Program and Kids Discovery Club are held Monday through Friday at The Plains United Methodist Church, 3 N. Plains Road. Kids Discovery Club is held from 9 to 11:30 a.m., and lunch is served from 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. Both are free and open to everyone.

Good Works has sponsored the lunch and kids club programs for many years. Funding assistance has been received from the Sisters of St. Joseph and local donors. Wasserman said about 200 individuals, groups and businesses donated food and other supplies to this year's programs. He said Kiser's BBQ Shack in the Market on State is making weekly donations of meat.

"One of the really beautiful things is this is another illustration of how a community can come together to really love and help our children," Wasserman said. "This has been a collaboration (that's brought) together so many participants of goodness to create good in

the community, and we're really grateful to see that happen. It's 200 participants with everyone doing their part."

The Summer Lunch Program and Kids Discovery Club began June 22 and runs through Aug. 14. Enrollment is still open for children ages 5-12. No registration is needed for the meal.

"We had two goals for the program," Wasserman said. "The first goal was to create a summer program for kids. We also wanted to create a place where people could be helped with food needs and make new friends. Thanks to the greater Athens community, we have had a wide range of food resources donated to us."

Healthy food is a big part of both programs. Children are being taught about good nutrition, and nutritious food, including fresh fruits and vegetables, are served at lunch. The program has been well attended, he said. Attendance varies, but on Monday, a pretty typical day, 30 adults and 20 children were served lunch.

"We feel like we are meeting a need in the community," Wasserman said. "We are so appreciative of the help we are getting. Good Works pays for the program, but The Plains United Methodist Church has partnered with us. They don't charge us. ... We wouldn't be able to do this program without their help. That church is such a resource for this community, and we are so grateful."

Kim Clark, one of six Good Works summer interns, is in charge of Kids Discovery Club. She said each day has a different theme, including sports and recreation, animals, science and nature, music and art, and mystery and adventure. Each day begins with a "health fun fact." During "faith time," Bible stories are read, followed by more singing.

"We sing some silly songs with them and play games," Clark said. "We have different presenters from the community. We had a POW, a musician, some artists, all kinds of people. We had a lady who brought bubbles for the children. They do workshops each day."

Children have gone on field trips to the post office, People's Bank and Foodland. An upcoming field trip will be taken to the Allen Pet Clinic.

Wasserman said these programs are just two components of a larger Good Works summer program that includes fixing roofs, building ramps, painting, and caring for lawns for people in need. This year, in a new project, Good Works created eight community gardens. Two 14-year-old interns are working in the gardens.

For almost 15 years, Good Works has invited volunteers from around the country to participate in its good works. This week, 37 people from Connecticut are helping. Other groups have visited from Indiana, Kansas, Rhode Island and Wisconsin.

The groups stay in Good Works dormitories and work on various projects. Wasserman said most are youth groups with adult chaperons.

“We share what we’ve learned about the culture, history and people of Appalachia and give them the opportunity to serve,” he said. “... We invite the groups to volunteer at our shelter, Timothy House, and we invite them to spend an evening with homeless people. It is very educational for them.”

It’s hoped the groups will start their own programs to help others.

“We want each group that comes, and we have 50 groups each year — we want them to look at each other at the end and say, ‘We could do this where we live.’ We want to inspire them to do good in their local community.”

Kim Clark soon will return to Kentucky to pursue a master’s degree. She said the kids club has been a positive experience for her as well as the children.

“I’m so thankful for this opportunity,” Clark said. “The children seem to enjoy it a lot, and I enjoy working with them. They are very uplifting and kind to each other. It makes me feel good.”

Good Works is a private nonprofit organization, and all donations are tax-deductible.

For information, contact Wasserman at [keith@good-works.net](mailto:keith@good-works.net) or 594-9000, or visit [www.good-works.net](http://www.good-works.net).