

Fairbanks Daily Newsminer - Sunday, April 16 2017
Bright Futures Fairbanks Launched to Address Basic Needs of Children
By Heather Rauenhorst, Fairbanks North Star Borough School District

These are challenging economic times, and many children in our community are coming to school without things most people take for granted like basic school supplies, winter gloves, and backpacks. Many times, a child's teacher and other school staff reach into their own pockets to provide food, clothing, and school supplies for students whose families may be struggling. Teachers know that if students' basic needs are not met, then they do not learn at their full potential.

Bright Futures Fairbanks works together to support basic needs of children by bringing together existing resources through partnerships with businesses, faith-based organizations, non-profit agencies, military units, service clubs, parent groups, and the school district. Who can a teacher reach out to for nutritious snacks, boys size nine wide shoes, prescription eyeglasses, zippers for winter coats, backpacks, glue sticks, pencils...etc.? Now a teacher or any other school staff person who identifies a child's basic need can refer to the Bright Futures Fairbanks community resource guide at www.k12northstar.org/brightfutures and contact appropriate resource providers directly. If resources to meet that need do not already exist, school staff can reach out to the community for help meeting the child's needs by utilizing the Bright Futures Facebook page at www.facebook.com/brightfuturesfairbanks.

Several successful partnerships are ongoing, and Bright Futures Fairbanks will work to expand on successes like the Brown Bear Pantry at Badger Road Elementary School, which provides a regular supply of child-friendly meal and snack items. Principal Joanne Vanfletern said, "Our Business Partner, Dodie Caputo, makes weekly visits to school and helps with distribution. She and her partners own the Riverview Quick Stop on Badger Road and the Roundup Steakhouse in Fairbanks. Dodie faced some challenges growing up and knows what it feels like to need a helping hand, so she wants to give back to the community."

More information about Bright Futures Fairbanks and how you or your group can adopt a school, host a drive, or to participate in planning a "parent camp" go to www.k12northstar.org/brightfutures or call (907) 452-2000 x11225.