

## **The Salvation Army is accustomed to mobilizing in crises and its response to COVID-19 is no exception. Effective Monday, the Salvation Army began to distribute bag lunches weekdays to schoolchildren in Beaver Falls, Aliquippa and New Brighton.**

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Effective Monday, the Salvation Army began to distribute bag lunches weekdays to schoolchildren in Beaver Falls, Aliquippa and New Brighton.

“We’re taking our vans around to different housing locations and distributing a bag lunch,” said Maj. Evelyn Hopping, the Salvation Army’s Beaver County coordinator. “Schools are going to be doing lunches out of certain schools; however a large majority of kids won’t be able to get to the schools because there’s no transportation.

“We have to meet the need as soon as possible,” she said. “This is something that never happened and people weren’t prepared for it. Parents weren’t prepared to feed their children these two weeks of break and lunch makes it very difficult for them.”

As the coronavirus pandemic evolves, sites and times may be adjusted, Hopping said.

“We’ve never done this before, that’s what I keep telling people,” she said. “This has never been done before.”

Last week, when all schools in Pennsylvania were ordered to close to minimize spread of coronavirus, Dwan Walker, mayor of Aliquippa, contacted the Salvation Army office in the city and asked if the nonprofit organization could do something to help children that depend on schools’ free- and reduced-lunch programs.

That same day, Hopping said she was at a grocery store and a grandmother behind her said she now would have to feed her grandchildren lunches and that would pose a difficulty.

That’s when Hopping said the Salvation Army came up with the bag lunch distribution.

“We want to make sure kids who aren’t able to get to school will still receive lunches,” she said. However, children will have to “leave right away. There’s no gathering around the van because that defeats the purpose,” she said, of the recommended social distancing.

Bag lunches will consist of a sandwich; fruit or fruit cup; popcorn, pretzels or chips; juice box; and likely a small sweet item.

The Salvation Army's food banks also have to readjust.

Instead of clients shopping at banks and choosing their own food, now they will receive prepackaged boxes delivered to their cars.

"We can't have them gather in any of our buildings either," Hopping said.

Likewise, its soup kitchen will now be grab-and-go meals instead of eat-in dining.

Presently, the Salvation Army has a "small base" of volunteers. If anyone is interested in helping, Hopping suggests calling her office at 724-846-2330 and she will determine need in each of the Salvation Army offices in Beaver Falls, Rochester and Aliquippa.

Those wishing to donate food for the student lunch bags can drop off chips or drinks at any of the three sites, said Hopping.

And monetary donations are appreciated, too. Checks should be made payable to Salvation Army with "lunch program" or "feeding program" notated on the memo line and mailed to 414 16th St., Beaver Falls, PA 15010.

"We just want to take care of need right away," Hopping said.

Credit:

**Marsha Keefer**

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