

A Midview Middle School teacher caught the eye of Principal John Brown on Wednesday when she arrived to school to set up her classroom and brought with her a large box of individual macaroni and cheese bowls.

Brown joked that the teacher was starting her lunch stash a little early — Midview classes resume Aug. 29. The teacher said the ready-made meals were actually for her students, the ones that show up too hungry to concentrate.

Hours later, Brown joined others at Clearview's Durling Middle School where two founding members of the 100 Women Who Care About Lorain County showed up with a stack of checks totaling \$9,650 to partially fund two school-based food pantries, one each at Durling and Midview middle schools. Second Harvest Food Bank of North Central Ohio will pilot the initiative at five schools starting next month, including one at each of the Lorain middle schools.

"It serves the whole Clearview and Midview communities, and this will allow the schools to create a different relationship with the communities, showing them that the building is not just a school," said Second Harvest CEO Julie Chase-Morefield.

Brown said the first food pantry day is set for late September and will be held monthly through the school year and possibly through the summer, if the demand is there. Between the two schools, the goal is to serve 100 families.

The food pantries address a need in Lorain County that has brimmed for years — childhood hunger. Second Harvest sees the need across the county. And, according to data from the agency that serves families and communities throughout Crawford, Erie, Huron and Lorain counties, one in five children in the region are food insecure, meaning they lack reliable access to a sufficient quantity of affordable, nutritious food.

This year, the food and meals provider began looking at its community approaches with an aim to feed children in a more holistic way to create food security for the entire family. By working with schools to provide food to families, the initiative will dramatically increase the amount of food and meals families and their children will receive to address child hunger in the region.

The donation from 100 Women is about supporting that objective.

"It's a basic need," said Susan Bowers, one the founding members of the organization that started in October 2010. "It's not luxury. When we think of all the organizations 100 Women has give to over the years, we see that we are supporting basic needs. But if you support the needs, then the families can go and do other things to sustain their households."

100 Women has raised more than \$313,000 in eight years, with 100 percent of the funds remaining in Lorain County to benefit nonprofits. Its male counterpart, 100 Guys Who Care About Lorain County, was formed a few years later.

Laura Manning, Durling's principal, said students in the Clearview district are 100 percent eligible for free breakfast and lunch, which gives students two guaranteed meals a day when school is in session. The food pantry will help families when school is not in session.

There is one student, now in high school, who routinely comes to the school in search of food for his younger siblings. He cares for them in the evenings and needs the food to make sure they eat.

"Stories like that make you know this food pantry is needed," she said.

(from the Chronicle Telegram)