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# 'Stuff the Bus' marks 20th year

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Jul 28, 2024

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Members of the Western Kentucky University women's basketball team participate in the 'Stuff the Bus' event during the 20th annual Stuff the Bus live event on Saturday outside the Center for Student Activities. The event is available online at [bgdailynews.com](https://www.bgdailynews.com)

Photos by Grace Ramey McDowell / [grace.ramey@bgdailynews.com](mailto:grace.ramey@bgdailynews.com)

Saturday marked the 20th time Tony Rose and other community members sought literal busloads of school supplies for children and families in southcentral Kentucky and Warren County.

It was the 20th time people responded with enough donations to fill up actual buses.

“I never thought that my legacy would be defined by pencils and crayons and backpacks,” said Rose, the longtime morning show host at D93.

“I’m pretty proud.”

Rose and a group of volunteers held their first donation drive in 2005; to publicize it, they lived and slept in school buses for days until donations filled up the vehicles. Organizers have since expanded their advocacy under a nonprofit that’s active year-round – the Stuff the Bus Foundation.

On Saturday morning, in the grass lot beside Crossroads Express on Scottsville Road, some 20 volunteers prepared seven canopies for a day of collecting and boxing school supplies.

Slim Chickens served up food. Tampico Beverages brought the drinks. Two school buses, parked on the grass, awaited supplies.

“It is sweat equity,” Rose said, in a school bus interview, about the team’s efforts. “Everybody out there is putting their own spin into it – and that’s their legacy.”

Executive Director Magen Estep said they were on track to fill at least two buses by the end of the day.

Houchens Food Group announced \$25,000 in its “Summer of Giving” donation drive. Through Aug. 3, the company is collecting donations at its Crossroads, Priceless, IGA, Ace Hardware and Save a Lot locations across Southcentral Kentucky – money that it says will go toward classrooms, schools and families in the communities the donations came from.

The nonprofit’s Thanksgiving “turkey drop” comes next, where it plans to serve meals to 1,000 families – 100 more than last year. After that, it will kick off its TopGolf Nashville fundraiser in March. Then, there’s the 5k “fun run” fundraiser, which marks the start of the next Summer of Giving.

Barring unforeseen circumstances, the Stuff the Bus Foundation organizes these events annually, Rose said. All the while, it fundraises some \$4,000 to \$5,000 in teacher grants each month, Estep said.

Several attendees on Saturday spoke of their connections to the mission.

Kristin Clark, a third-year volunteer, said her mother worked as a teacher in Butler County for more than 30 years. Multiple times, Clark said, she saw her mother buy school supplies for her students.

“(This) has a special place in my heart because I can see the good that this is doing for all the kids that need it,” Clark said.

Vice President Savannah Watkins said the upcoming turkey drop brings to mind her late grandmother.

“She was the rock of our family, and Thanksgiving was her favorite holiday,” Watkins said. “It’s a special time for our family to remember her.”

Watkins said she hopes to help families create similar memories with their loved ones.

Members of the women’s basketball team at Western Kentucky University showed up early with donations after a trip to Walmart. Collin Stoecker, assistant athletic director at Western Kentucky University, said the baseball and men’s basketball teams would also participate.

The team’s Acacia Hayes recalled shopping for school supplies as a child with her mother.

“Being here and being able to do stuff that I did with my mom and doing it for other kids – that is special to me,” Hayes said.

Hayes' teammate Alexis Mead said that participating reminded her of the times she would volunteer to help communities experiencing poverty whom she grew up around in California.

“We always did events like this every year, where we would give back to kids,” Mead said. “So, to continue that on out here, it just means a lot.”

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**David Horowitz**