

UNITED WAY VOLUNTEERS GIVE 200+ HOURS AT DETROIT LIONS HOMETOWN HUDDLE

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It's 8 a.m. at Mason Academy on the east side of Detroit. The hallways are bustling as students get ready to start their day. The shuffling of shoes, shutting of lockers and endless chatter is amplified by the strong sense of hope and excitement in the air.

On Nov. 19, more than 60 United Way volunteers — along with Detroit Lions cheerleaders, retired players and mascot Roary — participated in the Lions' Hometown Huddle at the school. At the event, volunteers constructed classroom kits, student care kits, Gleaners food packs and hand-written encouragement cards to support the staff, students and families of Mason Academy.



More than 60 United Way volunteers participated in the Detroit Lions Hometown Huddle volunteer event in November. Photo courtesy of the Detroit Lions

MEETING STUDENTS' BASIC NEEDS

At United Way, we know that students can't succeed if they're lacking basic necessities or classroom supplies. One of the ways we support this effort is through volunteer projects that provide support kits to schools.

"We want to be sure that teachers, students and families are supported and equipped with the tools needed to be successful," said Angela Beckman, director of Volunteer Engagement.

Access to classroom supplies is essential, but many teachers are forced to pay for them out of their own pockets. In Michigan, teachers spend an average of \$628 of their own money on school supplies each year. Nine out of 10 teachers do not receive reimbursement for their purchases.

A lack of necessities directly impacts students, too. In our region, one in five children struggle with hunger. Additionally, three out of five teachers say they reach kids who regularly come to school hungry. For these children, school meals may be the only food they can count on.

Studies show that hunger can impact a child's ability to learn. Additionally, a lack of other necessities — like a stable, safe home environment — can hinder the learning process.



Detroit Lions cheerleaders play with students at Mason Academy during the Lions Hometown Huddle event with United Way. Photo courtesy of the Detroit Lions

HUDDLE FOR 100

This year, the NFL celebrates its 100th anniversary. One way the league is celebrating is through volunteerism with the "Huddle for 100" initiative, which inspires individuals to volunteer toward a goal of 100 million minutes of service. Across the country, United Way chapters partner with NFL teams to host Hometown Huddle — a day of service in celebration of

youth health and wellness.

Here in Detroit, the Lions partnered with United Way for Southeastern Michigan to support Mason Academy teachers and students by bringing Hometown Huddle to their school. Our nonprofit partners like Gleaners Food Bank, City Year and Playworks supported the event.

The classroom supply kits included teacher necessities like Clorox wipes, Kleenex and dry erase markers. The student care packages included items like lotion, hand sanitizer, toothpaste and toothbrushes. The Gleaners weekend backpacks included food, as well as recipe cards and other nutritional information for students and their families.

In addition, Playworks hosted several activity stations for students with the help of Detroit Lions players, cheerleaders and our favorite mascot, Roary.



Comerica Bank volunteer Christina Akoma says she volunteers as often as she can. Christina packed kits at the Detroit Lions Hometown Huddle on Nov. 19.

A COMMITMENT TO COMMUNITY

Corporate partners like Caniff Electric Supply and Comerica Bank also provided support and staff volunteers.

"Comerica is committed to the community," said Patricia McCann, Comerica senior diversity consultant of social impact. "We've been here for 170 years and we understand that our success is tied to the success of the community. It's our responsibility to get engaged and have our employees out and about and making sure that we do our part to help build tomorrow's future."

Volunteers wrote encouraging notes with positive affirmations for the students. One card read, "There's something in you that the world needs..." reinforcing their importance to society.

Comerica employee Christina Akoma loves to give back and volunteers as often as possible.

"As much as I can give back to the children and make their lives better each day, I will," she said. "And if I could do more, I definitely would."



United Way volunteers at the Hometown Huddle wrote encouragement cards for students.

DELIVERING HOPE TO LOCAL FAMILIES

"Not only are we meeting basic needs of students and teachers, but we're also bringing a little bit of joy to the day by bringing players, cheerleaders, Roary and Playworks," said Jen McCollum, senior director of community relations and Detroit Lions charities. "Hometown Huddle is really a perfect culmination of everything we believe in and care about."

Volunteers gave 204 hours of their time at Hometown Huddle. They packed 30 classroom kits, 450 student care kits and 400 Gleaners weekend food backpacks.

The Gleaners weekend backpacks help ensure that students don't go hungry over the weekend. The classroom kits offer support to teachers, so they don't have to pay out of pocket for classroom necessities. The student care kits provide support to students who would otherwise lack the necessities. As a result, volunteers delivered more than kits from classroom to classroom — they delivered hope.

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