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6/8/11

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CAC's Focus on Kids a three-prong plan to fight hunger

By **Noreen Lewis Cochran**
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Special photo

From left, Dick Thacker, Jill Stair and her son Zachery Stair, 3, work on the Community Action Center Summer Lunch Box food drive at Church of St. Andrew Presbyterian U.S.A. in Sandy Springs.

Summer camp, lunch boxes and school supplies are the three sides of Focus on Kids, a campaign in which Sandy Springs-based nonprofit Community Action Center will address Sandy Springs and Dunwoody children's needs.

"CAC is offering three opportunities for individuals and groups to help disadvantaged local children this summer by 1) sending a kid to camp, 2) providing summer lunches for a child or 3) by donating costly school supplies," said nonprofit spokeswoman Kristen Ristino.

Ristino said some families whose children receive free or reduced-price lunches during the school year have challenges during June and July.

"Consider that in Sandy Springs, 63 percent of children in public elementary schools receive lunch assistance, which means they are living near the poverty level," she said. "Some schools in Dunwoody have near 40 percent of students on the lunch program."

Ristino said the Send a Kid to Camp program makes dreams come true for financially challenged would-be campers. "We match the interests of youngsters to day or overnight camps for enriching summer experiences," she said. "A \$250 donation sends a child to one week of overnight camp, a \$50 donation sends a child to one week of day camp and a \$25 donation provides transportation for a child to get to camp."

The camp and lunch programs run through Aug. 31, while the school supply drive, helping children prepare for the school year with a new backpack crammed with must-haves like crayons and paper, runs July 1

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through Aug. 31.

Nonprofit Executive Director Tamara Carrera said volunteer groups are getting involved, like Dunwoody United Methodist Church, Church of St. Andrew Presbyterian U.S.A., Sandy Springs-based UPS and the Riverside/North Harbor Streaks swim team.

"The Focus on Kids campaign has something for everyone, whether individuals or groups such as businesses, civic organizations, neighborhood associations, families or summer programs," she said. "The Summer Lunch Box food drive is a great project for groups with children who can help assemble the lunch bags for kids in need."

Other suggestions including holding yard sales, collecting donations at the office or transporting lunches and school supplies to consumer families.

The center is located at 1130 Hightower Trail.

Information:

Call (770) 552-4889 or visit www.ourcac.org.

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