Students Lead Southeastern Randolph Middle School Food Drive, Support Local Food Pantry

When Rayne Lawson and Emma Moon, eighth grade students at Southeastern Randolph Middle School, decided to lead a food drive at the school this past December, the students ended up with more than they bargained for – in more ways than one.

Rayne and Emma’s involvement in the school’s student-led “Student Life” gatherings prior to the start of school on Wednesday mornings served as the impetus and inspiration for the food drive. Out of compassion for area families who may not have enough food for holiday gatherings, the students initiated a school-wide effort to collect non-perishable food items and donate them to the Ramseur Food Pantry. Because Rayne and Emma had never undertaken such a project, they had no frame of reference for the logistical challenges and preparatory work involved. Rayne collected North Carolina “hunger facts” from websites such as www.ncfoodbanks.org and www.foodshuttle.org, and the girls presented the data in their food drive pitch to school principal Gail Powers. Regarding that initial meeting with Ms. Powers, Emma stated, “We were really nervous,” and Rayne added, “We had a lot of rough drafts.”

Principal Powers scrutinized the food drive plan, asked helpful questions, and offered encouragement to the two students. Once the plan was approved and the students discovered that Ms. Powers was “really cool”, the students’ initial nervousness began to shift to excitement.

After establishing a giving goal of 1,000 non-perishable items, Emma confessed, “We honestly didn’t expect to make the goal.” The girls established December 1-15 as the dates for the campaign. For publicity, the girls made posters, shared hunger facts during the school’s morning announcements, and encouraged classmates to support the cause. To ignite a school-wide competition, Rayne and Emma sought and received approval for a popcorn-and-soda party for the homeroom with the most donations.

The two girls participate each afternoon in a leadership club at the school called Academic Leadership via Principal’s Squad (ALPS). It was during the ALPS meeting time each day that Rayne and Emma traveled to classrooms to collect donated food items. Media Coordinator Scarlett Auman gave permission for the two students to store the food items in the school’s media center.
Emma created a spreadsheet to track giving by homeroom and was astonished to discover that midway through the campaign the goal of 1,000 items had already been surpassed! When all was said and done, the food drive netted 2,046 items, more than double the original goal.

Rayne and Emma attributed the food drive’s success to the support of their Southeastern Randolph Middle School classmates and school staff. Teachers Crystal Booth, Michael Hatfield, and Matt Knowles, along with students Carlie Badeaux, Gabby Cassidy, and Nocona Anderson, played integral roles in the campaign. Mr. Hatfield’s homeroom was awarded the popcorn-and-soda party, which was celebrated on January 25, 2018.

In addition to assisting needy families, the food drive benefitted the two student leaders. Emma acknowledged that preparing for the food drive “got me out of my comfort zone” and “created so many opportunities.” The campaign’s success can also be attributed, at least in part, to the differing skill sets the two student leaders brought to the mix. Rayne’s phone skills and Emma’s interpersonal skills complemented one another, and they both improved in skill areas at which they weren’t as adept. “Now, I can make phone calls,” Emma stated. Of her working relationship with Rayne, Emma went on to say, “We’re good partners. We strive to excel.”

Of her students’ food drive efforts, Principal Gail Powers shared, “Rayne and Emma engaged in a work of passion that paid dividends to our community. The 2017 Food Drive was a monumental success because of their leadership. They pitched a call for proposal, complete with research and a marketing plan to support the effort. As a result, the outcome far exceeded their intended goal. It is students like Rayne and Emma that make my work at Southeastern Randolph Middle School an absolute pleasure.”