'God beat on my heart'

SWRHS student collects supplies for Texas

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ASHEBORO — To say that the Southwestern Randolph High School student body, teachers and those in the surrounding area have a sense of community spirit is an understatement.

Lathe McDuffie, a senior at the high school and current student body president, put that sense of community on display as he sought to help those in need following Hurricane Harvey.

AN EFFORT FOR THE AGES — Lathe McDuffie, left, and Bobby Menius meet at a local grocery store where Hurricane Harvey relief supplies were purchased after a $1,000 donation by Menius to an effort started by McDuffie.

See SUPPLIES, page 6A

Supplies
From page 1A

to the test last week when he asked for everyone’s help after Hurricane Harvey hit Texas in late August. The storm has left more than 300,000 people without electricity and caused billions of dollars in property damage. At least 74 fatalities have been confirmed.

“For about three days, God beat on my heart,” McDuffie said after hearing of the devastation in Texas. “I told my pawpaw about it at 12 o’clock at night — that we were going to Texas and he said, ‘What?’ I told him that we were going to get the Beta Club and FFA to help and get together supplies and go to Texas. I give all the credit to God for doing this.”

Grandpa is Robert Callcuit, owner of R&H Motor Lines Storage, and he immediately got on board, asking for donations to help fill the 28-foot trailer placed in the parking lot at the school.

“We did an all-call to all the families who have students at the school about it, too,” Lathe said. “I’ve also been announcing it at school every day.”

Word had gotten out in the community and one day last week, the school’s secretary got an unusual call, inquiring about the donation drive.

“A 98-year-old gentleman named Bobby Menius heard about what we were planning and called the school,” Lathe said. “He lives at Cross Road Retirement Community and heard about it and wanted to help.”

Menius met with Lathe at a local grocery store with a check made out to the store in the amount of $1,000 — to purchase supplies to help fill the trailer.

“Mr. Menius was very specific. He wanted to take care of the babies. That was his main objective,” Lathe added. “He made sure we purchased things for the babies, like wipes and diapers. We took that $1,000 and spent $1006.47 total. I was proud of that.”

Lathe said that anyone interested in helping can donate items by dropping them off at the school, 1641 Hopewell Friends Road, Asheboro, between now and Thursday afternoon.

The most urgently needed items include paper products such as toilet paper and paper towels, baby diapers, bottled water, and bleach, bleach and more bleach.

The 17-year-old son of Susan and Jeff McDuffie, Lathe will begin the 20-hour trip to the Houston area with his dad, grandpa Robert Callcuit, and cousin, Clint Callcuit, on Friday at around 9 a.m.

“I can’t say enough about this entire school and community,” he said. “I ultimately believe that the United States of America is the utmost nation in the world when faced with devastation from natural forces. We put our differences aside and unite to achieve. This is also the best school in the county without a doubt. People actually transfer here because they can’t believe a school like this one exists. Everybody here loves everybody. We are really all on the same level.”

His ultimate goal?

Thanks in part to the help of the students at his high school, area churches (Brower Wesleyan Church has been a big help, he said, along with a Sunday school class at High Pine Wesleyan Church), and the community, Lathe is determined to fill that 28-foot trailer “slam full” of supplies, which will be delivered to a high school in the Houston area. The students at that school will be the recipients of the supplies to assist in each family’s recovery.

“We are leaving Friday morning, but if someone drops off a donation early that morning, we will make sure it gets on that trailer.”