

School's Cool

Frequently Asked Questions



What is School's Cool?

A St. Bartholomew Catholic Faith Community ministry that provides every student who participates in The Banyan Community program a new backpack and school supplies every year, along with the expectation to succeed. Students attending Catholic Schools also receive uniforms.

What is The Banyan Community?

The Banyan Community is a Christian Community Development Corporation (CCDC) that builds relationships and improves the lives of both youth and adults living in the East Phillips neighborhood of south Minneapolis. Their programs are divided into three strategies: Develop Youth, Strengthen Families and Create Community. Visit their website at www.banyancommunity.org for more information.

Why are they called the Banyan?

The word Banyan comes from a Banyan Tree. Banyan trees have a large center trunk. Long branches reach out and then drop a vine to create another tree. Their vision is that Jesus Christ is the center trunk; the new trees are the families and children in their community. A grove of trees, or large community, is created around the center trunk.

How is St. Bart's involved?

St. Bartholomew strives to walk with the two feet of social ministry: **charity** (social service) and **justice** (social change).

The St. Bart's Banyan Committee volunteers seek parishioners willing to sponsor a Catholic school student with uniforms, backpack and school supplies for about 50 kids each year. Additionally, the 80+ kids of the Banyan attending public schools are provided backpacks and school supplies by parishioners as well. Cash donations are also accepted in both instances so that volunteers may use the funds to shop for the School's Cool Program.

Parishioners provide the necessary tools (social service). The Banyan provides a safe environment where "School's Cool" is the approach and success is the expectation. After school, the participating kids return to the Banyan to participate in educational programming, study hall and tutoring. This foundation and belief in education in turn has a positive impact for the families in the East Phillips neighborhood (social change).

How successful has the program been?

Every year the Banyan program has grown to include more children, and St. Bart's parishioners have met the challenge of meeting the "School's Cool" needs. The children participating in the program, and their parents, are required to meet the standards set by the Banyan in order to participate in the Banyan program. Since the inception of this cooperative program, the Banyan students have a 100% graduation rate, compared to the city of Minneapolis graduation rate of 50%. The primary educational success of participants has translated into college and careers - opportunities made possible because of the Banyan.

Will the sponsored child contact me?

All sponsorships remain anonymous to the students and their families. All sponsored students write a personal thank you to their sponsors, and committee volunteers forward them to the appropriate sponsors. This instills a sense of gratitude and responsibility in the students.

How do I participate in School's Cool?

1. \$325 – Sponsor a **Catholic** school student with backpack, school supplies and uniform essentials. School's Cool committee does the shopping for you!
2. \$200 – Sponsor a **Catholic** school student with uniform essentials purchased by the School's Cool committee. Shop for the backpack and school supplies yourself – list provided by School's Cool committee.
3. Provide a backpack and school supplies for a Banyan youth attending public school. Information provided by School's Cool committee.
4. Make a donation – any amount is needed and appreciated!

Email or call parishioner Denise Didier and she will quickly provide you with the information to participate (didier.mn@comcast.net or 763-559-5887).