

Azusa homework house starts a new year

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Children pick out free backpacks provided through a Jansport and Azusa Pacific University partnership, and a local church while at the Neighborhood Homework House in Azusa on Tuesday, Sept. 6, 2011. The Neighborhood Homework House is starting up again with the new school year in session. (Rachel Luna / Staff Photographer)

School is back in session and Our Neighborhood Homework House is in full swing, ready to help students with their academic studies.

Based on the program's name, the likely thought is of a typical after school tutoring program.

But the title doesn't represent the entirety of the Christian-based nonprofit program. Rather, it provides a glimpse of a program that goes beyond classroom success.

"Homework House is a different kind of venue because we come along side the entire family," Executive Director Barbara Dickerson said. "... we have a whole menu of opportunities for the

parents to learn about."

The organization equips at-risk Azusa children and their families to thrive not only academically,

but socially and spiritually as well.

Parents have access to learn more about the K-12 school system, the college preparation process and take classes that help build their family foundations in the home and community, Dickerson said.

The homework house provides a safe place for students to study and spend time after school hours five days a week and throughout most of the summer.

"Students are able to come here and have adults from APU and the community who are here just to be with the students, help them with homework and to talk to them about their day... and the students are able to stretch out in ways that they aren't necessarily able to do at home," Teen Program Director Adrian Greer said.

Many

students in Azusa come from multiple family homes and do not have their own space to study

A ProFlowers advertisement featuring two bouquets: one with pink roses and another with yellow and purple flowers. The text reads: "Send flowers for any occasion Bouquets from \$19.99+s/h ProFlowers Offer ONLY available at: proflowers.com/happy or call 1.877.804.1133".

or to call their own, so some of them wind up in gangs just to get away from home, Greer said.

In the second week of September, Azusa Pacific University partnered with Jansport to donate more than 150 backpacks to children who were signed up. A local church also donated another 150 to the students.

"The kids got to see that people that they've never even met, think about them and care about them, and wanted them give them something exciting for the school year," Senior Program Director Shana Urive said. "It gives them extra encouragement to start the school year fresh."

And because of the help Our Neighborhood Homework House receives, it is able to invest in each child one-on-one through tutoring and mentoring.

Originally established in 1997 by two teachers at Dalton Elementary, the homework house has continuously grown over the years. More than 300 volunteers from Azusa Pacific University and the community annually help run the program at its three locations in Azusa.

This year, 170 students are expected to enroll and more than 50 parents on a waiting list to get their children into the program.

For more information about the program, call 626-969-7051 or visit www.neighborhoodhomeworkhouse.org.

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