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Cedarville Kids Learning to “Thrive”

CEDARVILLE, OHIO -- In the quiet community of Cedarville, Ohio, Jewel Harkleroad noticed several kids roaming the streets after school until late at night. This observation sparked Thrive, an after-school program of Grace Baptist Church that now involves students from Cedarville University.

Thrive was established in 2018 as an after-school opportunity for Cedarville children to be tutored and fed. Ten years ago, Harkleroad, director of Thrive, began inviting children into her home for an after-school activity. This became more than she could handle, which prompted Thrive.

Thrive meets at Grace Baptist Church in Cedarville on Monday from 3-7 p.m. and Thursday from 3-5 p.m. Each Thrive meeting includes fun activities and tutoring, with dinner added to Monday night.

The goal of Thrive is to connect Cedarville residents with emotional, spiritual, physical and academic resources with those who are under resourced in those areas.

A large part of Thrive is the tutoring program, which is led by Holly Ryan. Cedarville University students participate in this aspect of Thrive.

“Cedarville students are faithful week after week, and they are also willing to be flexible to meet the needs that the kids have at the moment,” said Harkleroad. “This is what allows the students to feel truly loved.”

Katrina Tucker, one of the tutors from Cedarville University, said she loves not only tutoring but being an older sister to the young girls there. “It is so rewarding to personally know the kids and watch them learn and grow through some of the most pivotal years in their lives,” said Tucker.

One unique activity Harkleroad leads during Thrive is called “Thrive Five.” Harkleroad will share one lie and then a truth to counteract the lie. During a recent Thrive, Harkleroad asked, “Has anyone ever heard in your head that you are a mistake?” One of the girls answered, “I have never thought that in my head but it has been told to me.”

“We shared the truth that they are fearfully and wonderfully made,” Harkleroad said. “This is just one example of the impact that Thrive is having in the lives of these students.”

For more information about Thrive, contact [Grace Baptist Church](#).

Located in southwest Ohio, Cedarville University is an accredited, Christ-centered, Baptist institution with an enrollment of 4,380 undergraduate, graduate and online students in more

than 150 areas of study. Founded in 1887, Cedarville is recognized nationally for its authentic Christian community, rigorous academic programs, strong graduation and retention rates, accredited professional and health science offerings and high student engagement ranking. For more information about the University, visit www.cedarville.edu.