

Columbus Middle 5th Graders Learn How to be Prepared for Disasters and Emergencies



STEP Program Teaches Kids How to Assemble Emergency Kits and Develop an Emergency Plan with Their Families

COLUMBUS, Thursday, March 17, 2016 – With severe weather season fast approaching, nearly 110 5th graders at Columbus Middle School learned today how to be prepared to respond in the event of a disaster or emergency.

The students are participating in the STEP, or Student Tools for Emergency Planning, program for the first time. The statewide program teaches 5th graders how to be prepared for various emergencies and disasters, including tornadoes, flooding and storms. The program also shows students how to put together an emergency kit and develop an emergency plan with their families.

“With little to no warning, disasters and emergencies can happen to anyone at any time,” said Principal Loren Glasbrenner. “That’s why we feel it’s so important to be prepared. We’re excited to bring the STEP program to Columbus Middle and give our students the tools and knowledge they need to have confidence in an emergency situation.”

At the event, the 5th graders assembled their STEP emergency bags with items donated by local businesses. The students also heard from officials from Wisconsin Emergency Management, Columbus Emergency Management and AT&T, as well as Fire Chief Randy Koehn and State Rep. John Jagler, about actions they can take to be prepared in an emergency or disaster situation.

“The STEP program is a great way to get young people excited about emergency preparedness and to take that information home to their families,” said State Representative John Jagler. “By teaching students how to put together emergency kits and emergency plans, we are helping them be better prepared for disaster situations.”

The 2016 STEP program is supported by a \$15,000 AT&T Innovation & Investment Award. AT&T has a long-standing commitment to disaster preparedness and business continuity, and is the first company in the nation to earn U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) certification for disaster preparedness. Since 2012, AT&T has provided \$58,000 total to support the STEP program in Wisconsin.

“We know how critical it is to be ready and prepared to respond in the event of a disaster or emergency,” said Scott T. VanderSanden, president of AT&T Wisconsin. “Not only are we proud that our network operations are state-of-the-art when it comes to performing during and after a disaster, but we are also proud to help prepare Wisconsin families to respond to emergencies through our support of the STEP program.”

Teachers are provided with all STEP materials at no cost to the schools, including instructor guides, DVDs and copies of student handouts. All students participating in the program also receive an emergency kit to take home, which includes a flashlight. The basic lesson is only one hour of instruction, but teachers can expand the lessons to cover eight hours of materials.

This is the sixth year that STEP is being offered to schools in Wisconsin. Over 11,000 students from 200 schools across Wisconsin are participating in the STEP program this spring. Over 28,000 students have participated in the program over

the past five years. To view the list of participating schools by county, please visit http://Readywisconsin.wi.gov/step/step_2016_Schools.pdf.

For more information on STEP, please visit <http://readywisconsin.wi.gov/step/>.

The AT&T Wisconsin Innovation & Investment Award program provides funding to local organizations and programs that improve the community by advancing education, enhancing the environment, promoting economic development, or delivering other community services.

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