

LOAVES AND FISHES
By Alexander and Claire

On Friday, January 12, 2018, the Fifth Grade visited Loaves and Fishes in New Haven, CT. Loaves and Fishes is a community service organization run by volunteer workers. The purpose of this trip was to learn more about this organization and how it benefits the New Haven Community. Every year STTS holds a food drive and a clothing drive to support Loaves and Fishes but we wanted to learn more about how our donations help and what we could do to get more students at STTS involved in this month's clothing drive.

We met with volunteers who helped at the Sunrise Cafe like Trudy, Charlie, and Sally, for instance. Sunrise Cafe is where guests come to Loaves and Fishes on weekdays to eat breakfast. People "Shop" for food and clothes on Saturday mornings without paying for them.

We toured the facility, located at 57 Olive Street in New Haven, in the basement of St. Paul and St. James Church. We saw the main hall where meals are served and food is laid out for distribution, the clothing room, the kitchen, the food storage room, and the rooms where volunteers sort, hang, and store clothing. About 150 (up to 300) people visit Loaves and Fishes each Saturday morning. 10 guests at a time are allowed into the clothing room and have only 15 minutes to select up to 15 items of clothing. Only 5 items can be men's clothing. This is because there are a lot more women's clothes than men's clothes at Loaves and Fishes. There are about an equal amount of men and women visiting Loaves and Fishes each week, but most clothing donations are women's clothes. Donations of NEW socks and underwear are always needed! They also need men's coats, shoes, pants and tops and any warm clothing. We were surprised to learn that Loaves and Fishes does not get many donations of children's clothing.

Loaves and Fishes receives around 35,000 articles of clothing every year. Many items, including off-season items, are stored in the back rooms. During the winter, they put summer clothes in bins to be stored, and they do the same to winter clothes in the summer.

A highlight of the trip was when we got to help the volunteers. We helped by sorting and hanging donated clothes. We learned to hang all clothes on special hangers; they have hangers for shirts, gowns, pants, even belts! Some students in our class helped the volunteers prepare bags of child-friendly snacks. These bags and a book are given to children who visit Loaves and Fishes on Saturday mornings.

We hope that our school can contribute by collecting the most needed items. (Men's and children's clothes, Winter gear and warm clothes, shoes, NEW underwear and socks, and blankets.)

Students and their families are welcome to volunteer on Saturday mornings from 7:30-10:00 am. There are also opportunities to help on weekday mornings for those who are available to do that.

Let's see those donation bins fill up!