**Westerville Caring & Sharing**

**Who is Westerville Caring & Sharing?**

Westerville Caring & Sharing (WC&S), a community-centered charity, is an all-volunteer organization founded in 1988 by the Westerville Area Chamber of Commerce and the Westerville YWCA to reach out to Westerville City School District students/families who are in need. The organization started as a holiday program for families who were having economic difficulties due to low-paying jobs, illness, job loss, or disaster. The purpose of Westerville Caring & Sharing is to help people get back on their feet, especially around back-to-school and holiday time. WC&S is an all volunteer, charitable organization, which became a 501(c)3 charitable organization in 1993[[1]](#footnote-2). WC&S is not associated with any organization or business.

WC&S has been helping the Westerville community for 25 years and will continue its commitment to the Westerville community for many more years. WC&S is one of a few 501(c)3 charities in the Westerville community that is all-volunteered based. The volunteers work out of their homes, volunteer their time, and organize and implement fundraisers to cover the cost of administrative expensive, such as postage, office supplies, voicemail, etc. No part of a personal donation is used for any   
business-related expenses. Although many people volunteer for the two annual programs—Back-to-School and the Holiday Project, WC&S has only a core of ten to twelve individuals who plan and organize these endeavors.

Westerville Caring & Sharing’s mission is to encourage individuals, businesses, civic, church, and school groups in the Westerville area to care for the less fortunate and to share their resources of time, funds, and energy. The two annual programs that WC&S sponsors—Back-to-School and the Holiday Project—require donations in the forms of money, school supplies, food, gifts, etc.

Past Presidents of Westerville Caring & Sharing are:

* Gayle Carr
* Max Peoples
* Bobbie Nelson
* Patti Stewart
* Mary Pugh

The 2017 Board members of WC&S are:

* Barbara McCoy, President
* Mary Pugh, Co-Vice President
* Bobbie Nelson, Co-Vice President
* Michelle Brown, Treasurer
* Charlene Sourvanos, Secretary
* Michelle Brown, Communications & Social Media Coordinator

**Who does WC&S serve?**

Westerville Caring & Sharing serves Westerville students who qualify for the subsidized lunch program. WC&S also provides school supplies and holiday gifts to students whose families are having economic difficulties due to job loss, illness, or disaster. In the September 1992 *Columbus Monthly* magazine edition, the city of Westerville was the 5th wealthiest community in Central Ohio. Many people in the Westerville and in the Columbus metropolitan areas have the perception that there are no poor people living in Westerville. The median income in 2000 for Westerville residents was $69,131. [[2]](#footnote-3) In 2010, the median income was $80,932[[3]](#footnote-4). Even though the median income is high, a large number of Westerville students are on the free and reduced-price lunch program.

WC&S has been able to help only a fraction of the students on the lunch program at back to school time and during the holidays. Every school in the Westerville district is helped by Westerville Caring & Sharing.

to School Project, the goal fell short by $12,000.[[4]](#footnote-5) For the 2002 Holiday Project, donations were down while more families are seeking help[[5]](#footnote-6). Money was needed for gift cards, which are given to students for purchasing clothes.

In 2009, WC&S stopped mailing the Holiday Project applications due to the cost of postage. As a result, applications are now handed out at the Westerville Library on established days. By not mailing the applications, probably half of the families were not reached for the Holiday Project.[[6]](#footnote-7) Volunteers, on occasions, donate their own money for administrative costs.[[7]](#footnote-8)

In August 2010, WC&S saw an increase in requests for help with back-to-school supplies.[[8]](#footnote-9) Without the ability to help more students, the organization had to hold firm on the application deadline. The total number of students assisted in the Back-to-School Project was a record number of 400 students[[9]](#footnote-10) Mary Pugh, WC&S President said” It’s very special for us to be able to give back to so many kids, but it’s also sad that there are so many that need our help.”[[10]](#footnote-11)

Over the years WC&S has raised awareness on the need for donations for both the Back-to-School Project and the Holiday Project. Without the support of the community, WC&S could not give the students the necessary school supplies or holiday gifts every year.

**How does Westerville Caring & Sharing fund their projects?**

WC&S receives its annual monetary funding from the community through various fundraising activities. The dollar amount donated varies throughout the year and from year to year. Some years WC&S raises enough money to supply all the student/families who request help. Other years, funding falls short, and the number of families helped is reduced. One hundred percent of monetary donations are given back to the community. Only children in the Westerville City School District benefit from WC&S.

Examples of various fundraising activities that occurred over the years are listed below:

* WC&S garage sale
* Raffles from various organizations
* Neighborhood toy sale
* Westerville Chamber of Commerce’s Evening of Elegance
* Westerville elementary students saving pennies
* Westerville middle and high school students collecting money
* Restaurants donating a percentage of sales on a given day

Without the support of individuals, civic groups, and businesses, Westerville Caring & Sharing would not be able to assist students. WC&S relies on area businesses and individuals to donate school supplies, gift cards, and to sponsor families at holiday time.

**Holiday Project**

The Westerville Caring & Sharing (WC&S) Holiday Project was started in 1988 as a way to reach out to Westerville families who were experiencing economic hardships due to low-paying jobs, illness, job loss, or disaster. WC&S serves Westerville students who qualify for the subsidized lunch program. As more families have moved into the Westerville City School District, the diversity of the district increased and the number of families in need has increased.

The Holiday Project has two components—Christmas Gift Sponsorship and Food Drive. The Holiday Project helps students and their families with items from their wish list, food basket, gift certificates, and personal hygiene products. Westerville Caring & Sharing cannot do what they do without the cooperation and participation of the Westerville community. The community’s involvement revolves around four key areas[[11]](#footnote-12)—

* sponsoring a child or a teenager,
* giving a financial donation,
* volunteering their time, and
* organizing a food drive.

[Christmas sponsorship program description] The Westerville Caring & Sharing Holiday Project assists students and their families with gifts, food baskets, personal hygiene and household products through a sponsorship, consisting of individuals and/or businesses/organizations. In the 2012–2013 school year, over 4,200 Westerville school students qualified for the Christmas sponsorships. This is a 340% increase over the number of students who qualified in the 1998–1999 school year. Without sponsors, many families would not be able to exchange gifts on Christmas.

[Christmas sponsorship info] The Christmas sponsorship is a community-wide project where WC&S recruits sponsors to provide items from a student’s wish list. Sponsors are asked to spend a minimum dollar amount per student. Every year, families fill out an application to participate in the Holiday Project. Once accepted, students and/or parents /guardians fill out a wish-list where requests for clothing, toys, electronics, books, etc are recorded. A sponsor is then matched with a student(s) to purchase items from the wish list. The sponsors then deliver the gifts to the distribution site.

The Westerville community supports WC&S in many ways. Civic groups donate winter coats for children ranging in age from pre-school to high school. Many restaurants donate a portion of the day’s proceeds to Westerville Caring & Sharing. Fundraisers from different organizations and school students were held to raise money to buy gift certificates and other items for students and their families. As an example of student involvement with WC&S, in 1999[[12]](#footnote-13), Westerville elementary students raised $225.81 by collecting pennies. In 2001, Westerville’s two high schools raised $34,300[[13]](#footnote-14) and in 2010, the three high schools donated $39,465[[14]](#footnote-15). On occasions, WC&S does not have enough funds or sponsors to assist the families which have applied to the Holiday Project. Articles in the Westerville News & Public Opinion appealed to the community for support.

[Food Drive program description] The Westerville Caring & Sharing Holiday Project assists students and their families with gifts, food baskets, personal hygiene and household products. In the 2012–2013 school year, over 4,200 Westerville school students qualified for subsidized meals. This is a 340% student increase over the number of students who qualified in the 1998–1999 school year. When schools are in recess, these students do not have access to two meals. The Holiday Project Food Drive provides extra food for the students and their families, to ensure that no one goes hungry.

[Food Drive info]The food drive is a community-wide project. Over 50 Westerville community businesses allow donation boxes to be placed on their premises. In addition, organizations, civic groups, city employees, and the school district have their own food drives, and donate what they collect to Westerville Caring & Sharing. During the 1997 Holiday Project, Westerville City middle school students collected approximately 8,000 canned goods; and in 1998, city employees donated approximately 8,200 pounds of food. In 2008, 15,569 food items were donated. In 2010, the community donated 13,381 food items. With available funds, WC&S volunteers bought another 572 items which brought the total for 2010 to 13,953 items. For the 2012 Holiday Project Food Drive, 9,961 food items were donated. Additional food items for that year were not bought by WC&S volunteers due to insufficient funds.

**Back-to-School Project**

With having a successful Holiday Project in 1988, the members of Westerville Caring & Sharing (WC&S) expanded a year later to help students with back to school supplies. The Back-to-School project is designed to help families with school-aged children who might be overwhelmed in providing school supplies and clothing.

Families who qualify for the subsidized lunch program are eligible to participate in the Back to School project. These families might have experienced economic hardships, illness, or disaster. WC& S gives students the same type of school supplies that everyone else has. This allows the students on subsidized lunch program to start the school year on an equal footing.

**[Back to School description]** The WC&S Back-to-School Project assists students and their families with a book bag and age-appropriate school supplies. In addition to school supplies, personal hygiene products are also given as these items cannot be purchased with food stamps. In the 2012-2013 school year, over 4200 Westerville school students qualified for subsidized meals. This is a 340% student increase over the number of students who qualified in the 1998-1999 school year. It is important that these students start the school year on an equal footing with their peers.

**Community Recognition**

* 1991 Westerville City Council resolution commending WC&S for helping Westerville  
   families[[15]](#footnote-16)
* 2000 finalist for the Jefferson Award[[16]](#footnote-17)
* 2001 Columbus Dispatch Community Service Award winner[[17]](#footnote-18)
* 2001 Westerville Area Chamber of Commerce Service Award[[18]](#footnote-19)
* 2005 Rotary Club of Westerville’s A. Monroe Courtright Community Service Award[[19]](#footnote-20)
* 2013 Westerville City Council proclamation honoring Westerville Caring & Sharing on   
   25 years of community service[[20]](#footnote-21)

**Grant Awards**

* Sept 2014, $2,500.00 from the Honor Project (Back-to-School project)

1. I.R.S. letter, February 14, 2005 [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. City of Westerville <https://www.westerville.org/index.aspx?page=260> [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. City of Westerville <https://www.westerville.org/index.aspx?page=260> [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
4. Westerville News & Public Opinion, Lori Lowe, 1996 [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
5. Westerville News & Public Opinion, November 27, 2002 [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
6. Westerville News & Public Opinion, November 11, 2009 [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
7. Westerville News & Public Opinion, October 14, 2009 [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
8. This Week in Westerville, August 5, 2010 [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
9. Westerville News & Public Opinion, August 11, 2010 [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
10. Westerville News & Public Opinion, August 11, 2010 [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
11. This Week in Westerville, November 27, 1995 [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
12. Westerville News & Public Opinion, November 24, 1999 [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
13. Westerville News & Public Opinion, December 19, 2001 [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
14. Westerville News & Public Opinion, December 15, 2010 [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
15. Westerville City Council Resolution #91-24, November 19, 1991 [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
16. WBNS 10TV letter dated March 9, 2000 [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
17. The Columbus Dispatch letter dated March 20, 2001 [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
18. This Week in Westerville, May 2, 2001 [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
19. Westerville News & Public Opinion, June 8, 2005 [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
20. Westerville News & Public Opinion, e-edition, December 1, 2013 [↑](#footnote-ref-21)