Ks ElementaryBucketSolution /with photo

Donation not just drop in bucket for Crawford County school

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FarmWeek

Farm ingenuity and an unusual corporate donation created “a good, old-fashioned fix” for a rural elementary school’s COVID-19 challenges.

Not just a drop in the bucket, Principal Jason Stark’s idea worked so well it may continue after the pandemic restrictions are gone.

Stark, Washington Elementary School principal, faced many COVID-related challenges at his Robinson school in Crawford County. “We literally had to rethink every aspect of every day,” he remembered.

One persistent issue was safe storage of school supplies, such as crayons and pencils, students traditionally share and need throughout the day. Another challenge was the shared storage spaces for backpacks and coats in the ‘60s-era building.

During a staff meeting, someone mentioned buckets as potential storage tools. Stark, whose daughter and son show pigs, immediately thought of the large buckets his family uses for Purina feed supplements. He envisioned those containers as the right size and shape for his students’ needs.

So, the principal reached out to Purina. Not sure who to contact, he sent an out-of-the-blue email to the division that handles questions, such as how to feed the supplement. “In late July or early August, I sent out the plea,” Stark said.

Within a few days, his request reached Tanya Dowda, director of sourcing and business alignment. The principal explained his dilemma and goal to provide every student with a bucket.

Six hundred buckets later, Washington Elementary teachers give the unique storage bins gold stars. “I’ve actually had teachers say this is a great thing and they would like to continue them down the road,” Stark said.

The students? “Everything is so new, they rolled with the punches,” the principal reported. “I think their families feel (it is) safer.”

And so does their principal who saw a feed supplement container as a way to help his students.

“In a school’s time of need, we found a good old-fashioned fix” by partnering with a company in the agriculture industry, Stark said. “It certainly was a unique take on ag in the classroom.” end