

Atheists Work to Block Charity From Feeding Starving Kids

Alliance Defending Freedom (ADF) sent a letter Friday to Robbinsdale Area Schools after an atheist group complained about students participating in a community service project at a church to pack meals for needy families in Haiti, citing separation of church and state.

“Public schools should encourage students to participate in as many community service opportunities as possible,” says ADF legal counsel Matt Sharp. “The Constitution does not prohibit students from cooperating with a religious organization to help starving families, which is not any sort of government endorsement of religion. Neutrality toward religion does not permit schools to discriminate against beneficial programs simply because they are run by Christians. That is not neutrality but the very hostility toward religion that the First Amendment forbids.”

Students at the School of Engineering and Arts recently visited Calvary Lutheran Church to participate in a volunteer program sponsored by Feed My Starving Children, a nonprofit organization run by Christians that seeks to eliminate world hunger for children. As part of the program, students prepared prepacked meals that would be sent to malnourished children across the globe and did not engage in any religious activities.

The Alliance Defending Freedom letter explains that “public schools may constitutionally work with religious charities to provide food or other secular goods and services to impoverished children.” Moreover, the letter states, “Courts have consistently upheld instances where schools cooperated

with religious organizations ... where they had a valid educational purpose for doing so.”

“The School has not promoted any religious aspect of the church or the non-profit organization,” the letter adds. “Nor can AHA point to any such evidence. The School simply chose to cooperate with a local charity to do nothing more than prepare meals for impoverished children. The School is not advancing religion at all.”

“It’s shameful for groups like the American Humanist Association to attack charity groups that provide impoverished children with help they wouldn’t otherwise receive,” says senior legal counsel Jeremy Tedesco. “We hope that our letter will help Robbinsdale Area Schools understand that they can continue to allow students to participate with Feed My Starving Children and other worthy humanitarian service programs for the benefit of the needy.”