



## ***Lunch in the Park Norwalk Police Give Back to Those in Need***

**June 6, 2014** – On Friday June 6 2014 the police department sponsored a weekly summertime event known as Lunch in the Park. The lunch is a mission of the Norwalk United Methodist Church to provide food and activities to the Norwalk community children during the summer when school is out.

Carol Martinez, the event organizer said, “During the school year, the students have plenty of activities to keep them occupied and a healthy meal for lunch. When school is out, that might not be the case for some Norwalk children. So we provide this mission for those who might be food insecure.”

In the past the church has sponsored the event each week. This year, however, the church decided to look for sponsorship from local businesses to help provide the meals and to participate in the fun. Martinez said that when the Norwalk Police department heard of the opportunity “they jumped right on board.” The Police department collected \$100 from its officers and donated it to the program. According to Chief Staples, “the officers were eager to be able to give something back to the community they serve.”

The police department has many programs that are designed to create relationships between the officers and the children while they are in school. But when school is out, sometimes the gains that were made during the school year erode. Staples realized this and when he heard about “Lunch in the Park” he immediately recognized an opportunity to fill a gap in the police department’s efforts.

“Once school is out, our ability to maintain contact with the children is much more difficult,” Staples said. “‘Lunch in the Park’ is just a great opportunity to interact with the entire community on a level much different than the usual police contact.” This project gives both the Norwalk police officers and the community the chance to see each other in a different setting.

“Successful community policing is about relationships,” said Staples. “When you can break bread with your neighbor and interact with them on a personal level the positive relationships needed to keep the community crime free can develop.”

“We are always looking for opportunities to connect with the community, especially the children,” Chief Staples said. “To be able to do that and show our appreciation to the community by providing this meal makes it all the better.” School Resource Officer Brad Criswell agreed. “We had a great time with our young residents today. It’s nice to be able to give something back and try to help, even in this small way”.

Lunch in the Park will continue each Friday afternoon until school is back in session. If you are interested in sponsoring or want to help, please contact the Norwalk United Methodist Church. The Norwalk Police Department encourages and challenges each business and community group to get involved and sponsor a Friday "Lunch in the Park."