

## **Couple Keep Promise with Back-To-School Drive in East Flat Rock**

EAST FLAT ROCK - After organizing the March For Change, a peaceful walk and rally in downtown Hendersonville in the aftermath of the video-recorded killing of George Floyd, a Black man, by a white police officer in Minnesota, Tim and Telisha O'Riley promised to hold future events to improve race relations in local communities.

They did just that Saturday, when the husband and wife held a school supplies drive and fundraiser for disadvantaged children at their home on Upward Road.

Tim O'Riley said he and his wife originally planned to hold a 3-on-3 basketball tournament, but when the coronavirus pandemic forced them to postpone the event, they came up with a new idea.

"We were just brainstorming, trying to figure out a different way to reach out to the community and help people, so we thought a back-to-school drive would be a good way to do that," he said.

"We've been working on this for a month; we're going to work with the Boys and Girls Club to identify kids in need."

He said the basketball tournament is still in the works, and the Hendersonville Police Department has reached out to him to stage a multi-team flag football competition.

"We're always looking for ways to bring the community together," O'Riley said.

Two large cardboard boxes were filled with pens, notebook paper, folders, crayons, scissors and other school supplies halfway through Saturday's four-hour event, bringing smiles to the faces of several people who also enjoyed free hot dogs, courtesy of the O'Rileys and "grill master" Travis Collins, a Spartanburg, South Carolina resident who plans to move to Hendersonville in the near future.

The event included a voter registration booth staffed by League of Women Voters volunteers, as well as local small-business owners who are working to increase their visibility.

Telisha O'Riley said it's important for people to know about voting rights, and to learn as much as they can about social and political issues before going to the polls or voting by mail.

"I just feel like not enough of us are educated about who's in office, and they're the ones that make decisions for our community," she said. "Being able to know and have a voice of who's in office is going to make all the difference."

"I always believed that if you had a felony on your record, you couldn't vote," O'Riley added.

"A lot of people think that, but that's not the case. We're just trying to knock down all the misinformation."

But getting people out to vote could be a challenge if the coronavirus pandemic continues ravaging cities across the country, according to League of Women Voters of Hendersonville volunteer Brenda Sherrer.

"People are concerned about going to the polls," she said. "They don't want to get sick."

Fortunately, absentee ballot requests are available at county elections offices, Sherrer said.

Nearby, Emma Gilliam, a student at East Henderson High, is looking forward to voting for the second time on Nov. 3, having already cast a ballot in one of this year's primaries.

“I think it’s important for young people to vote,” said Gilliam, who turns 18 in October. “I’m excited about voting for the first time in a presidential election.”

Anyone interested in making donations of any type, sharing ideas or volunteering for future events can do so by contacting the O’Rileys through their Facebook page, [Change4HVL](#).