

LEADINGTON FWB WAC HOSTS BENEFIT

June 1, 2011, a call went through the Leadington Free Will Baptist Church prayer chain, a prayer request that at first seemed confusing. “Stan and Ruby’s daughter, Jacque, and her son (one of a set of triplets) are missing.”

“What? A mom and her five-year-old son don’t just disappear.”

Stan and Ruby Rawson are faithful, active members of the Leadington church family who all knew Jacque and her miracle triplets. The babies’ debut at church when they were just a couple weeks old caused many *oooh’s* and *ahh’s*. Triplets meant plenty of opportunities to hold a baby.

That mysterious prayer request left the Leadington church family reeling. As the days progressed, like a horrible puzzle, more pieces fell into place. Others remained gaping holes, leaving the Rawson family distraught and living the worst nightmare of their life.

Jacque had left her two daughters (the rest of the triplet set) with her dad and mom while she went to sign divorce papers from her estranged husband, who had the little boy for a few days of visitation. When they finished signing the paperwork at the attorney’s office, he told her if she wanted her son, she must come to his house. What happened next, no one knows for sure. When Jacque didn’t return home at the expected time, the family feared the worst. Eventually, the son was returned to Jacque’s sister, who reunited the triplets—triplets excitedly waiting for Mommy to come home. Torturous hours turned into days, then weeks, then months. The search for her missing body remains ongoing.

The Leadington Church wanted to help, but what could they do? Of course, they could pray; pray they did and continue to do so. They could offer support

with hugs and words of encouragement, but that seemed so little. None had ever faced a nightmare like this.

As the shock wore off, practical thoughts started emerging. These triplets had to be raised; they would be starting Kindergarten in the fall. Think about everything a five year old needs and multiply that times three. Imagine the instant increase in budget and expenses of the aunt and uncle who were granted custody. With the case still unsolved, no life insurance or retirement funds could be collected for the children's care. Across southeast Missouri, friends and community started planning fundraisers—including Leadington WAC.

August 13, 2011 became the target date for the WAC fundraiser. What started as a yard sale snowballed into a community-wide event extravaganza. Women hoped to raise \$1,000. Some even ventured to hope for \$3,000.

After many hours of work, donations, help from all over the community, and a lot of prayer, August 13 dawned clear and bright (in spite of predicted rain storms). However, long before dawn, Leadington church folks were already at work, bringing out enough yard sale items to fill a circus tent—literally. Inside the church, workers set up a silent auction room filled with forty items and a room filled with so many baked goods that everyone thought they'd be taking home leftovers to eat for days on end. Outside, others set up barbeque grills and a car wash area, tables for face painting and a snow cone booth, as well as inflatables for kids. Then the cars started coming...and coming...and coming. For nine hours, the churchyard became a hive of activity. The "all day" barbecue sold out in just a little over an hour; people carted yard sale items by the boxfuls; bake sale items disappeared by noon (no leftovers) as men baked in the sun, washing car after car. With everything by donation (no set prices, except for a few select items)

donate is just what patrons did—and generously.

The outpouring of love and support for the family outweighed even the money raised for the triplets. The Rawsons, the triplets and their aunt and uncle, guests of honor, sat on the church porch and received hugs from hundreds of people.

At the end of the day, some very exhausted and tuckered-out Leadington church people put away the last table, picked up the last piece of trash and went home joyful. The joyful turned to jubilant, however, when all the money was turned in and counted. The day's profits totaled **\$9,427.97**. The money is now in a fund to help support three children who may never see their mommy again on earth but now know a lot of people love them.

One woman reflected, "This is what it's all about; money is important and the family needs that; but they need this even more—the love of their friends and church family, all the time knowing a loving God is also looking down and giving them His special hugs when they need it most."

Leadington folk agree. This undertaking seemed impossible for a small church like theirs to tackle. There was no way their few workers could pull off such an event. They knew this, but they also knew God was helping them. Leadington Women Active for Christ learned yet again that day, "God can do *great things* with just a little; He can do the impossible."

—Article by Missouri WAC president, Lee Ann Wilfong.



WAC President, Tracy LaBruyere, at the beginning of the day



Part of the yard sale; toys, electronics, shoes, purses, furniture, are not shown.



Bake sale early that morning—before tables were emptied and *everything* was sold.



A silent auction brought in \$1,500 for the benefit.



Our helpful men setting up for the BBQ.



The reason for the Benefit. All proceeds went to Avery, Maddox, and Addison Waller, whose mom, Jacque, has been missing since June 1.