



## News Release

# New Shoes, New Confidence for Craven County Students: New Bern Breakfast Rotary Club, Brightspeed Deliver More than 400 Pairs of Shoes

*The Kicks for Kids program has provided more than 7,000 pairs of shoes to children in Craven County since 1999*

**NEW BERN, N.C. — March 11, 2026** — Today, hundreds of students across Craven County received a new pair of shoes thanks to [Kicks for Kids](#), the 27-year-old signature initiative of the New Bern Breakfast Rotary Club. Since 1999, the program has provided more than 7,000 pairs of shoes to children in need, helping them walk into school with confidence and pride.

New this year, [Brightspeed](#), the nation's third-largest fiber broadband builder and local high-speed internet provider, joined the initiative as a committed community partner, working alongside Rotary volunteers to ensure students in need were connected with new kicks.

On Wednesday, March 11, Rotary members and Brightspeed met at [Coastal Sole](#), the long-time program supporter and shoe supplier, to prepare the shoes for delivery. From there, volunteers delivered more than 400 pairs of kicks to 20 different schools across Craven County.

"Our students deserve to feel supported and confident," said Jennifer Wagner, Director of PR and Communications for Craven County Schools. "Programs like Kicks for Kids remove barriers so kids can feel seen and focus on their schoolwork and not worry about essentials at home."

The students, chosen by their guidance counselors, often face challenges such as financial hardship, low self-esteem or bullying, all of which can impact academic performance. Each year, Rotary volunteers work closely with school officials to identify children most in need, personally meet with students to find the perfect fit and their favorite color. This ensures that each child receives a pair chosen just for them.

"Every child deserves to feel proud of themselves," said Tom Gingrich, Chair of Kicks for Kids and New Bern Breakfast Rotary member. "Kicks for Kids isn't just about shoes, it's about showing our children that their community cares."

Over the years, school leaders have reported a noticeable boost in confidence and classroom engagement among students who receive shoes through the program, reinforcing that this small act of kindness goes a long way.

"At Brightspeed, we talk a lot about access: access to reliable internet, access to opportunity," said Sabrina Anderson, Brightspeed local marketing manager. "But access also means removing everyday barriers so kids can show up confident and ready to learn. When a child doesn't have to worry about worn-out shoes or standing out for the wrong reasons, that's access too. We're proud to support the Kicks for Kids program that opens doors in such a tangible way."

Funding for Kicks for Kids is raised through the Rotary Club's Annual BSH Oktoberfest, held on the last Saturday of September. The event supports the program's funding goal to purchase shoes each year, while also contributing to scholarships and other community initiatives.

Brightspeed's support this year reflects its broader commitment to strengthening the communities it serves, not only by expanding high-speed internet connectivity across rural and underserved areas, but also by investing in programs that meet tangible, local needs and create opportunity for families.

To support the Kicks for Kids program, donations can be made payable to:

New Bern Breakfast Rotary Club Charities  
PO Box 14625  
New Bern, NC 28561

### **About Brightspeed**

Headquartered in Charlotte, N.C. and with assets and associated operations in 20 states, Brightspeed provides broadband and telecommunications services through a network platform capable of serving more than 7.3 million homes and businesses. Our nearly 4,000 employees are committed to building a future where more communities benefit from a more connected life, deploying a state-of-the-art fiber network and a customer experience that makes being connected as simple as it should be. For more information, please visit [www.brightspeed.com](http://www.brightspeed.com).

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