HOW TO HELP CHILDREN LIVING WITH FOOD INSECURITY

Dawn Wiseman, Gladwin Backpack Buddies
Team Leader
What is the “Backpack Buddies” Program?

- The program provides children in K-5 grades who are at-risk of hunger, nutritious food every weekend throughout the school year.
- Cost is only $100 per student, for the entire school year (suggested ordering in groups of 24).
What is the need?

- At least 25% of our children live in poverty. They suffer from not always knowing where their next meal is coming from.
- When a young person does not eat they cannot focus on learning.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>County</th>
<th>Estimated # food insecure individuals</th>
<th>% below SNAP threshold of 200% poverty</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Arenac</td>
<td>2,490</td>
<td>76%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clare</td>
<td>5,130</td>
<td>83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gladwin</td>
<td>4,090</td>
<td>74%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Isabella</td>
<td>12,080</td>
<td>77%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Osceola</td>
<td>3,510</td>
<td>78%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roscommon</td>
<td>3,900</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

County data - food insecurity rates are determined using data from the 2001-2011 Current Population Survey on individuals in food insecure households; data from the 2011 American Community Survey on median household incomes, poverty rates, home ownership, and race and ethnic demographics; and 2011 data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics on unemployment rates.
Impact on Families

- “The program feeds my children Friday night dinner. I depend on school lunches, so it is nice to have.”

- “It helps. They at least have a meal, when at times there isn’t any food in the house.”

- “Helps me more as a mom, even though I get Food Stamps. This really helps. When the cupboard looks fuller I feel better. I don’t worry.”
Kids Tell Us.....

- “I like pop tarts, they are my favorite.”
- “Could we have it on Mondays and Fridays? We run out of food fast.”
- “I like to have food to eat, because we run out of food.”
- “I eat all of my food. I’m mad when I don’t get it.”
**What goes in the backpack?**

Every backpack contains a breakfast, lunch, dinner and a snack for both Saturday and Sunday.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sample Sack #1</th>
<th>Sample Sack #2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 large box fruit loops cereal</td>
<td>2 poptarts packs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 beef ravioli</td>
<td>1 mac &amp; chz</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 mac &amp; chz</td>
<td>1 chx noodle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 spag. &amp; meatballs</td>
<td>1 bean &amp; franks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 chili</td>
<td>1 spag rings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 mixed fruit</td>
<td>1 honey &amp; oats granola</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 propel</td>
<td>1 bag of chc. animal crack.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 granola bar</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 chz sand. crackers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total Cost- $3.00  
Total Weight- 4.9 lbs  

Total Cost- $1.99  
Total Weight- 2.03 lbs  

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How To Get Started

- Contact the principal
- Contact the superintendent
- Contact your local food bank
- Start talking about the program
- Ask people to join the team
  - look for people that have skills that complement your weaknesses
Volunteers and site personnel are essential in order to have a successful Backpack Program. Helpers will be involved in each of the following steps.

- Receiving the food delivery.
- Distributing the food into the backpacks according to the menu instructions.
- Distributing the backpacks to the children.
- Collecting backpacks the following week for another cycle.
Receiving the Food

- The day of the week is set by the Food Bank.
- Delivery comes every two weeks.
  - Last delivery of the school year could be more than two weeks worth of food.
- Storing/Space for food.
Sorting Food

- Setting up an assembly line.
- Identifying quantity of each item that is put in the backpack.
- Filling the backpacks.
Distributing/Collecting Backpacks

- School Staff/Volunteers
  - Privacy
  - Professionalism
- Large Plastic Tub
Ask people to be part of the team
Set goals
Advertise the program/Community Awareness
Notify Food Bank of all fund raisers
Write grants
Plan events
Low cost fund raisers
Fiduciary Partner
- Local Organization
- Food Bank

Why order in groups of 24?
- Packaging
- Food storage rules
Lessons Learned

- Using backpacks
  - cleanliness
  - privacy
- Waiting lists
  - there will always be one
- Starting small
  - be careful how quickly you grow
We are currently serving 72 students in the Gladwin School District.

Word is spreading quickly and many groups are coming on board.

Our children and their families are experiencing a more food secure weekend. It is showing during the school day!
Food Bank Contact Info

- **Gladwin, Arenac, Roscommon Counties**  
  Food Bank of Eastern Michigan  
  2312 Lapeer Rd, Flint, MI 48503  
  810-239-4441, [www.fbem.org](http://www.fbem.org)

- **Clare, Isabella Counties**  
  Greater Lansing Food Bank  
  919 Filley St, Lansing, MI 48906  
  517-853-7800, [www.greaterlansingfoodbank.org](http://www.greaterlansingfoodbank.org)

- **Osceola County**  
  Feeding America West Michigan  
  101 Clay Dr, Comstock Park, MI 49601  
  616-784-2350, [www.feedingamericawestmichigan.org](http://www.feedingamericawestmichigan.org)
Hunger doesn’t take a vacation

Fight Childhood Hunger and Food Insecurity with the weekend Backpack Buddies program.

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