

Serving children in our Bellevue schools



BACKPACK MEALS FOR KIDS

BECAUSE CHILDREN SHOULDN'T GO HUNGRY ON THE WEEKENDS

2015-16 ANNUAL REPORT

The 2015-16 school year started out looking much like the year before:

- ✚ Hunger continued to plague too many students in the Bellevue School District in spite of a strong local economy;
- ✚ Backpack Meals for Kids continued to fight back against hunger by providing weekend meals for children of families in need, and
- ✚ Students who previously went hungry on weekends were able to feel better, perform better in school and look forward to a healthier, more hopeful future.

The year ended looking better than ever. Here's why:

- ✚ After four years of successful operation, Backpack Meals enjoyed a solid reputation for addressing childhood hunger efficiently and effectively.
- ✚ Local civic, business and faith organizations extended new resources to the program.
- ✚ New partnerships were formed.
- ✚ Innovative ideas for expanding the reach of Backpack Meals were developed for implementation in 2016-17.



A Tried and True Approach

Backpack Meals for Kids continued to rely on a simple formula for success:

Volunteer commitment + community generosity = serious help for hungry kids.

Throughout the year, program **volunteers** took responsibility for feeding hungry kids, week in and week out. Volunteers raised money, shopped for food, packed food bags, delivered the food to schools, collaborated with the school district and other partners, dealt with challenges and continually worked for program improvements.

2015-16 Backpack Meals By the Numbers

4,185 backpacks filled
29,500 meals provided
22 schools served
58 volunteers
1,435 volunteer hours

The generosity of **donors** made it all possible. In 2015-16, donors contributed \$37,653 in amounts ranging from \$10 to \$10,000. In-kind donations of food and other resources further expanded the program's capacity to feed hungry kids.

Special efforts

Some energetic donors put their own fund-raising skills to work, holding events to draw in additional donations for Backpack Meals. In August, for instance, Bellevue Sunrise Rotary named Backpack Meals as beneficiary of the club's annual Speed Croquet Tournament and Raise-the-Paddle Auction. From that event, the club raised \$7,000 for the program.

In March, preschooler Leland Elder (at right), his fellow students and parents from Samena Preschool conducted a donation drive for Backpack Meals for Kids, raising \$430 to "provide food to kids and families in our community."



Kids and parents said . . .

Each year Backpack Meals surveys kids, parents and school counselors to assess the program's effectiveness. This spring, 100 percent of survey respondents said they were happy with the program. Students and families said:

- *It makes sure that we don't have to go hungry during school.*
- *It makes your tummy less hungry.*
- *It helps you when you need food.*
- *If a friend of mine didn't have enough food at home, I would tell him about this program.*
- *It provides a few nice meals for you to eat.*
- *It's good if you're hungry and have no food at home.*
- *It really helps over the weekend.*
- *Everything is great. Thanks for all the yummy food.*
- *It helps people live better.*
- *We appreciate your love and support.*

And counselors said . . .

- *It's a wonderful program that truly benefits the kids and families. It's very easy for everyone but it makes a big difference.*
- *A hungry kid is not okay. Love the program and glad to be part of it.*
- *Children are appreciative and it is fun to see their smiles. It also gives the office a chance to connect with a smile and something positive.*



Financial picture

Volunteer effort and generous donations enabled Backpack Meals to complete its fourth year of operation well within budget. With 2015-16 operating costs just under \$33,000, the program will begin 2016-17 with a budget carry-over. As always, the immediate need is fund-raising for the remainder the 2016-17 school year.

2015-16 Year-end Financial Report

Food purchases	32,696
Other supplies (backpacks, postage, office supplies)	200
Total expenses	\$32,896
Total donations	\$37,653

Exciting changes ahead

Major changes were beginning to take shape by the end of the 2015-16 school year. By the time students arrive in September, several improvements will be evident, including:

- ✚ **Backpack meals for summer school** – In partnership with the congregation of St. Margaret's Episcopal Church, the program was prepared to launch its first ever Backpack Meals program for 2016 summer school students. The pilot program also served as the debut of another innovation: serving high school students through food pantries instead of pre-packed meals.
- ✚ **Food pantries** -- Backpack Meals will continue experimenting with food pantries for high schools, based on the idea that older students would prefer to select their own food from healthy options, rather than having it packed ahead of time.

✚ **Food for K-12** – The huge step contemplated for 2016-17 is the expansion to serve all grades. Previously, the program had focused on grades 5-12. A new approach to packing – with smaller, more condensed food packages and – once again, help from our donors, the Bellevue School District and an exciting new partnership – will enable the program to serve all hungry children in grades K-12.

Contact us

We welcome comments and ideas, and we look forward to hearing from our friends and supporters. Please see our web site, www.backpackmeals.org, for more information, to donate, or to join our volunteer effort.

Backpack Meals extends heartfelt thanks for the support of a caring, generous community.