

DONOR *report*

● VOLUME 2 | ● SPRING | ● 2018

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amazing things are happening!



FOOD BANK OF
NORTH ALABAMA

This amazing partnership of donors, the Food Bank, the agency programs, and the local schools ensure no children go to bed hungry over the weekend in our area!

Food Bank's Children's Backpack Program Continues Expansion to Meet Need

The Food Bank's weekend backpack program continues to grow as more and more churches, companies, and nonprofits step in to meet the need. Currently, the Food Bank supports 34 groups that in turn provide food for weekly backpack programs at more than 80 schools across North Alabama.

The Manna House, a partner of the Food Bank, was one of the first groups in the area to start a backpack program as they became aware of the growing need to feed children over the weekends. Soon after, other groups launched similar efforts. Together, they ensure that no child again goes hungry over the weekend.

The Food Bank has seen recent backpack program growth in two areas: the West Point community in Cullman County, and Elkmont in Limestone County. A common feature of these new programs is their willingness to collaborate with other groups to support one community school. Three churches support Elkmont Elementary and High Schools in northern Limestone County. This spreads the responsibility of packing and delivering the weekend meals among several groups, while also sharing the burden of the cost. Beth Hawkins, New Bethel Baptist's program director, said their congregation became involved in backpack ministry when they saw the great need in the community. Her church's youth group of 10-15 students packs the meal kits, which are then delivered to the school. They pack 124 meal kits each week for a month, and then take two months off. Friendship UMC's Elkmont campus and Elkmont UMC provide the meal kits during the other months. This collaboration is a great way to ensure the sustainability of the program.

A typical backpack menu is two individual servings of shelf-stable milk, two juices, two canned entrees, two fruit cups, and

two mini boxes of cereal, although the menu varies a bit from group to group based on foods available and also preferences. The goal is to provide enough food over the weekend to sustain kids who might not otherwise have enough to eat at home.

Our Child Hunger Corps Member, Laurel Moffat, says there are "more than 50,000 food insecure families in North Alabama," meaning, "thousands of children may not know where they'll end up this weekend and if nutritious food will be available. But our partners are stepping up to grow the program."

At each school, the teachers, cafeteria staff, and guidance counselors identify students at risk of hunger at home and then send a form home with parents, asking if they would like to enroll their kids in the program. Then, the number is passed along to the school's sponsoring organization, which provides the backpack meal kits each week without ever knowing the names of the children they serve.

The Food Bank steps in to support these sponsors, by helping provide either pre-packed backpack meal kits, or the individual items needed for the groups that want to pack the backpacks themselves. The weekend is a particularly vulnerable time for many children, who are guaranteed lunch (and often breakfast as well) each day at school but don't have access to those same meals over the weekend.

The Food Bank team and its network of partners are grateful to the many donors who support the Food Bank, and in turn the backpack program across the region. This amazing partnership of donors, the Food Bank, the agency programs, and the local schools ensure no children go to bed hungry over the weekend in our area!

