

WEEKEND BACKPACKS

Hunger doesn't take the weekend off

FALL 2021



A Message From Our President

We hope this newsletter finds you well after the ordeal of the pandemic. In previous newsletters we shared with you our gratitude for your support of Weekend Backpacks and our appreciation to our hundreds of volunteers and generous donors. While we can never thank everyone enough for the outpouring of support during the past challenging 18 months, we are pleased to be able to share some stories and thoughts from those “in the trenches” who, on a daily basis, see the extent of the need.

Again, many thanks for your support of helping feed as many children and families in the Baltimore City School System as we can.

Stu Dettelbach, President
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The State Of Hunger

“Food insecurity” is the catch-all phrase that describes the condition of just over 37,000 people under 18 years of age in Baltimore City. Just 18 months ago, that number was under 28,000 children. According to Feeding America, the nation’s largest hunger relief organization, the pandemic severely affected the lowest income portion of our population.

Food insecurity means that families must pinch pennies to have meals at the end of each week and, in many cases, go hungry unless they can find a food pantry or charity that can assist.

The pandemic has caused many businesses of all types to close their doors. We see restaurants, entertainment venues, retail shops, the hospitality industry and many other office locations with doors shuttered, windows covered or just holding on by a thread to stay in business.

Baltimore, like all major cities, has suffered. Due to the lack of major industries in the city, our problems may last longer and be harder to address.

According to the St. Vincent De Paul of Baltimore Organization, “One in eight people in Maryland, and one in four in Baltimore City, are food insecure. Many children in the Baltimore region are hungry when they arrive to school, and many have not eaten a full meal since they left school the day before.”

While we cannot attempt to solve the whole of the City’s hunger problems, we certainly are making great strides through the schools that we are actively assisting today.

“Our weekly school food pantry would not have happened without Weekend Backpacks. We serve about 70 Arlington Elementary School families who would not have been able to make it through the pandemic with the assistance of Weekend Backpacks.” – Jimmy Mitchell, Community Coordinator, Arlington Elementary School

The numbers are not pretty. Visiting food pantries around the city brings the numbers to life and puts faces on the problems. We are seeing some real progress with the families that we are serving.



“Weekend Backpacks allow our families to bridge the gap between what is needed for daily living and what is available to them currently. Our children are able to concentrate on their schoolwork since they are not feeling hungry or worried if they will have anything to eat when they get home from school.” – Tia Brisbon, Community Coordinator, The Arundel Elementary School

Where Does Your Money Go?

Weekend Backpacks prides itself on being an “all-volunteer” organization. From the preppers to the packers to the drivers to the leadership and directors – hundreds have given selflessly of their time to our organization, especially throughout the last 18 months.



This enables your donations to go directly to thousands of Baltimore City School children and their families. Each bag of food we pack costs between \$8.50 and \$10, depending on the week of the month. Our bags contain more food later in the month as money becomes tighter for the families and their SNAP card balances dwindle.

Each bag contains about 18 meals – approximately six meals for three people. Before the pandemic, we only needed to distribute during the school year. But both last summer and this, we have heeded the call and distributed bags to hundreds every week for the full year. Each school we add costs \$10,000. There are still many Baltimore City schools that we strive to add to our program.

We have been the recipient of generous grants from the Maryland Food Bank, and we have received tens of thousands of loaves of bread from H&S Bakery.

The full impact of the pandemic is yet to be felt. Until children return to school and the professionals recognize the extent of need, we continue to prepare ourselves to expand our program by adding more schools and supplementing the schools we currently serve.

Every dollar is stewarded to ensure that it contributes to helping us achieve our mission of improving education by decreasing food insecurity.

Matching Missions: The Knott Foundation

The Marion I. & Henry J. Knott Foundation is a Catholic family foundation committed to organizations that align with their priorities of Arts and Humanities, Catholic Activities, Health Care, Education, and Human Services. Weekend Backpacks' mission to help improve education by decreasing food insecurity makes us a great partner for the Foundation.

Thanks to their generous grant, we were able to add four additional schools. During the upcoming academic school year, we expect to deliver nearly 5,000 bags of food to these schools supporting approximately 120 children and their families — allowing them to start each week ready to learn, work and reach their full potential.

We welcome the Knott Foundation to our growing family of supporters.



Beyond The Food

Before the beginning of the school year, we request supply lists from the schools for kindergarten through fifth grade. Then volunteer Steve Eisenberg goes to work to find the needed supplies at the least expensive price. It is true artistry.

"Finding the right prices is trial and error. First, I google what I need 'in bulk.' Then, I find the 10% to 15% coupon for signing up. Next, I call and tell them we are a charity. After a day or two, I hear from the person in charge. I explain Weekend Backpacks and show the Governor's Service Award we were honored to receive," says Steve. Usually this ends with a great price for some of the supplies.

In addition, Staples has always been generous to our cause. When they have a great sale price, you are limited to how many you can purchase at a time. Originally, founder Sandie Nagel would find 15 ladies to go through the line while volunteer Leslie Monfred stood at the cash register holding the credit card. Now Steve is allowed to make all the purchases, but still only ringing up 15 at a time.

Since we know that most of these kids have siblings; we give each child two backpacks of school supplies. This year we are packing 2,000 backpacks.

To do so, we need:

2,000 composition books	1,000 pairs of scissors
24,000 pencils	2,000 spiral notebooks
8,000 glue sticks	12,000 pens
24,000 crayons	1,000 rulers
6,000 pocket folders	100,000 sheets of loose-leaf paper

Now that is a lot of school supplies. We want to be sure the children start the school year well prepared.



Next is logistics for packing the 2,000 bags. Since our packing facility is full of food, we need to find one day to get everything in, unwrapped, stacked, packed and out the door. The evening before we are ready to deliver, we bring everything to our packing facility from storage. It is estimated that we will need to run four lines twice. We pack as quickly as we can and get those bags into cars to be delivered.

That is not all we do. Several times a year, we send home toothbrushes, toothpaste and other hygiene products. At Christmas and Easter, we deliver canned ham. Every winter, we hold a gloves, hats and scarfs drive for the kids.



This past Mother's Day, we gave a bottle of scented hand soap and hand sanitizer in a gift bag. We included a black and white card with space to color in and add a note. We distributed 1,000 gift bags and brought lots of smiles to faces.

We hold fundraisers to support the ancillary things we do that go beyond food. Before the pandemic, it was an annual Chef's Event for Our Kids. This year, we needed to become creative.

Volunteers Barbara Portnoy Spector and Cindy Saval put on their imaginative hats and came up with a series of virtual events named "Chef's Event Reimagined." They included Souper Bowl Sunday, Mixology 101 Dueling Bartenders, Cupcake Decorating with Jason Hisley of Cake, and BBQ and Brew. It is not too late to join in for **Artisanal Bread on Sunday, November 14, 2021**. It is sure to be a good time.

Volunteers Barbara Gamse and Sandie Nagel also had some fun ideas. There was an online Lip Sync competition that was not only fun, but raised a lot of money from people voting for their favorite performance. Still to come is **Putt Putt Palooza Miniature Golf on September 12, 2021**. There is still room for players and sponsors for the event.

Why We Volunteer: By Natalie Sherman

When my stepmother, Rosemary Sherman, passed away in 2018, she left a legacy with her foundation, Providing Hope. The mission of Providing Hope is to educate young people about nutrition and healthy eating habits and address fresh food insecurity in lower income communities. So, when Weekend Backpacks approached our family about support, my father, sister and I thought it would be a great fit. After attending the "For Our Kids" event, we were hooked.

For the last two years, my daughters and I have volunteered at packings and prep sessions. In addition to the camaraderie of the volunteers, we continue to stay involved because we care deeply about all students being able to learn without the terrible distraction of hunger. We have introduced family, friends and classmates to the critical work of Weekend Backpacks, bringing them along to packings and hosting fundraisers on Facebook. My older daughter, Olivia, has made deliveries with Alan and helped with social media this summer. We are incredibly grateful to have Weekend Backpacks as a big part of our family's volunteer and philanthropic lives.



Want To Donate?

Go to www.weekendbackpacks.org/donate or mail a check to PO Box 21486, Baltimore MD 21282. We thank you for your support and generosity.

Upcoming Events:

Artisanal Bread on November 14th, 2021

Putt Putt Palooza on September 12, 2021

Visit our website for more information.



NEVER TOO EARLY to start collecting hats, gloves and scarfs to keep the kids warm this winter. Please drop off at Weekend Backpacks Headquarters at 1505 Bedford Ave in Pikesville.

Drivers Wanted

If you have an extra 60-90 minutes to spare for a wonderful cause, consider becoming one of our drivers. Contact Steve Eisenberg for more information at eisey1@hotmail.com or 410-615-3340.

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