

Feeding the Future of America A Volunteer's Guide to Leading a Blessings in a Backpack Program Site

When school dismisses on Friday, more than 15 million children will leave their classroom, uncertain whether they will have enough food to eat that weekend. One in five American children face food insecurity - more than the populations of New York City, Los Angeles, and Chicago combined. During the school week, most of these children depend on the federal free and reduced meal program their school offers. Sometimes, the meals at school are the only ones they get. When the school closes its doors on Friday afternoon, many of these children go home to empty cupboards and hunger pangs for 65 hours until they return to school on Monday morning. Who will feed them this weekend?

We will. Thank you for considering leading a Blessings in a Backpack program site and making hunger-free weekends a reality for children in your community. You are joining a team of dedicated volunteers who are part of a national team that provided more than 3.2 million hunger-free weekends to children living with food insecurity last school year. In your role as Program Coordinator you are responsible for:

- Leading the local volunteer team to raise funds to cover your school's food expense
- Serve as the liaison between Blessings in a Backpack and your school
- Partnering with a local grocer to purchase food and arrange pick-up/delivery of food
- Packing backpacks weekly

Due to the dedication of our volunteers throughout the country, children living with food insecurity will benefit from more than 3.6 million hunger-free weekends this school year. But we know the impact of our work goes beyond removing food insecurity. Student survey results show that children fed by Blessings in a Backpack experience the following positive results:

- 78% feel cared for by their community
- 71% feel they are helping their family
- 60% exhibit improved behavior
- 59% find it easier to learn at school

INTRODUCTION

Before getting into the details, below is some general information about Blessings in a Backpack and our work to feed the future of America.

MISSION STATEMENT: Blessings in a Backpack (BIB) mobilizes communities, individuals and resources to provide food on the weekends for elementary school children across America who might otherwise go hungry.

VISION STATEMENT: Every school-aged child in America has the nourishment needed to learn and grow. As a leader in the movement to end childhood hunger, BIB strives to ensure children don't go hungry on the weekends by empowering individuals and communities to take action.

If you are interested in mobilizing your community to feed children who are living with food insecurity, please review this entire document and complete the required paperwork. We look forward to partnering with you!

HOW MUCH DOES IT COSTS TO FEED A CHILD?

As little as \$100 feeds a student for the entire 38-week school year. \$90 pays directly for food to fill weekly backpacks and \$10 is dedicated to non-food program support. Each year, \$5 per student will be deducted from your online account effective April 1 and November 1, based on the head counts in place at that time.

STEP ONE: FINDING A SCHOOL

The first step is to identify a school in your area. If you do not have a particular school in mind, visit www.localschooldirectory.com, and select your state, then city. This results in a complete listing of schools in the selected area. The website looks as follows:



Click on the school name and scroll down to the “Faculty Details and Student Enrollment” section. The “Free Lunch Student Eligibility Breakdown” bullet gives number of children and percentage of children who qualify for the free or reduced price meal program at this school. The example to the right shows 110 students with 59.5% of the student body qualifying. This is the need at this particular school. Our goal is to feed at least 50 children per school.

Faculty Details and Student Enrollment

Students and Faculty

- Total Students Enrolled: 185
- Total Full Time "Equivalent" Teachers: 8.6
- Average Student-To-Teacher Ratio: 21.5

Students Gender Breakdown

- Males: 97 (52.4%)
- Females: 88 (47.6%)

Free Lunch Student Eligibility Breakdown

- Eligible for Reduced Lunch: 11 (5.9%) ←←
- Eligible for Free Lunch: 99 (53.5%)
- Eligible for Either Reduced or Free Lunch: 110 (59.5%)

STEP TWO: SCHOOL PROCEDURES

After selecting a target school, make an appointment to meet with the school principal or counselor to introduce the BIB program. Explain our mission “*Blessings in a Backpack mobilizes communities, individuals and resources to provide food on the weekends for elementary school children across America who might otherwise go hungry.*” Many schools, which have started the BIB program, have seen better test scores, improved reading skills, positive behavior, improved health and increased attendance.

The school’s role is to identify children to participate in the BIB program. Some schools will select children who appear to be most at risk while others may target children in a specific grade or level. Once the program is slated to begin, we recommend an *Opt-Out Letter* be sent home with the first backpacks of food. Please see page 8 in the attachment section.

We recommend you collaborate with school administration to determine if drawstring backpacks or plastic bags will be better for the BIB program at the school. If using drawstrings, school staff will need to collect these on Mondays so you can repack food for the following week. Plastic bags are disposable and will not need to be returned. Both are provided by the National Office at your request.

The school can determine how they distribute bags to students each week, and below are ways other schools have done it:

- Assigned staff members place filled bags in the child’s backpack in the children’s cubbies when the classroom is empty
- Children walk through an “assembly line” to pick up filled bags (this is usually done with larger BIB programs)
- Volunteers deliver packed bags to the designated classrooms for teachers to distribute

Confidentiality is a concern for all schools. The decision of which children will be selected to participate in the BIB program is made at the school level and is never communicated to a volunteer or the BIB national office.

BIB and our volunteers will only need to know the number of children being fed at a school. Please reassure the school that all participants and their families remain anonymous.

Photographs of volunteers and packing events are welcome—please share them widely to gain support for the good work you are doing. Photographs of children are not permitted. The BIB national office has images of children that have been approved for national release. Please contact your Program Manager (PM) with your requests.

Once you have received approval to start the program, please complete the following forms located at the end of the packet:

- Program Site Information Form:
This is completed once you have received school approval. Please provide as much information as possible. Once we receive these forms, you will be assigned a Program Manager (PM) to assist you with your account. The PM serves as the liaison between the national organization and the local school. Your PM will send you log-in information to the Program Coordinator Toolkit on the BIB website. This page contains formal “Opt Out” and “Opt In” letters as well as our logos, federal tax ID number, and other resources and tools to manage your program.
- Memorandum of Understanding:
This form is an agreement between Program Coordinators and the Blessings in a Backpack national office that you recognize this is a three-year commitment to feed the students at your designated school(s). Funding for one semester (19-weeks) must be secured prior to the start of the program.

The forms can be scanned and emailed to anitaknazze@blessingsinabackpack.org or faxed to (502) 259-9023.

STEP THREE: ENGAGE YOUR COMMUNITY

Blessings in a Backpack’s unique structure allows the program to be tailored to each community’s resources and needs. This flexibility and community-level focus has fostered rapid growth throughout the country, resulting in more children receiving weekend nutrition. Local volunteer teams focus on raising the support necessary to cover their community’s program expense. Your PM can assist you in developing a program budget for your site based on the number of children you are serving.

The local volunteer team is responsible for raising financial support to cover the food and a portion of non-food program expense for the children participating in Blessings in a Backpack at your school. We recommend you begin with feeding 50 children; you can always increase the number at a later time. To begin implementing the program, 19-weeks of funding must be secured. For example: 50 children x \$100 each x 3 years = \$15,000. Many of our volunteers hold fundraising events, research and apply for community grants, and solicit private donors, businesses, and organizations at the local level. The Program Coordinator Toolkit, located on our website, <http://www.blessingsinabackpack.org>, will have information and tools needed for fundraising. Your dedicated Program Manager will provide the link and log-in information.

DONATIONS

Checks: All checks should be made payable to Blessings in a Backpack with your **School's Name** on the memo line. Donations that note your school's name will be placed in your school's account. When donations are mailed to the national office or made online, and includes the donor's contact information, the national office will thank the donor for their support with a letter that serves as a charitable gift receipt. Checks should be mailed directly to our bank:

**Blessings in a Backpack Lockbox
PO Box 950291
Louisville, KY 40295-0291**

Cash: These donations can be forwarded to our office via a money order or check from the Program Coordinator with the donor's contact information along with the amount donated. When the donor's contact information is included, the national office will thank the donor for their support with a letter that serves as a charitable gift receipt. Do NOT send cash via ground mail.

Credit Cards: Those who wish to donate via credit card can go to the BIB's website homepage <http://www.blessingsinabackpack.org> and click on "Donate Now".

Please discuss any other type of intended donation with your Program Manager. Please only ask for donations to support the program as defined by Blessings in a Backpack and as outlined in the fundraising tools included in the PC Toolkit on the website. Any funds raised for purposes beyond providing weekend nutrition for children living with food insecurity must have prior approval from your PM.

To ensure your donors continue to give, Blessings in a Backpack recommends that the local volunteer team communicate with donors outside of asking for their support. Stewardship examples include a year-end progress report letter, a thank you note from a child, or inviting donors to come see the program in action. If you would like to learn more about engaging your donors to ensure their ongoing support, please ask your PM for more information.



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Feeding The Future Of America®



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MISSION

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VISION

Every school-aged child in America has the nourishment needed to learn and grow. As a leader in the movement to end childhood hunger, Blessings strives to ensure children don't go hungry on the weekends by empowering individuals and communities to take action.

One in five American children face food insecurity - more than the populations of New York City, Los Angeles and Chicago combined. During the school week, most of these children depend on the federal free and reduced meal program their school offers. Sometimes, the meals at school are the only ones they get. When the school closes its doors on Friday afternoon, many of these children go home to empty cupboards and empty bellies for 65 hours until they return to school on Monday morning. **Who will feed them this weekend?**

be emailed immediately to the email you provide below. PLEASE HIT THE DONATE button only ONCE. Charges will appear on your credit card statement as Blessings in a Backpack/Blackbaud Merchant Services. If the transaction was not processed, a red error message will be displayed. If you have difficulties processing your credit card, please email us at info@blessingsinabackpack.org and someone will contact you as soon as possible.

PLEASE HIT THE DONATE button only ONCE. You will receive an online confirmation (scroll down) and an email notification verifying your donation.

Donation Information	
Amount:	<input type="radio"/> Feed A Child For a Year \$ 100.00 <input type="radio"/> Other: \$ <input type="text"/>
Designation:	<input type="text" value="Specific School, Add school name in comment below"/>
Additional Information	
Type of gift:	<input checked="" type="radio"/> One-time gift <input type="radio"/> Recurring gift
Corporate:	<input type="checkbox"/> This donation is on behalf of a company
Comments:	<input type="text"/>
How did you hear about us?	<input type="text"/> *
Billing Information	
Title:	<input type="text"/>
First name:	<input type="text"/>
Last name:	<input type="text"/>
Country:	<input type="text" value="United States"/>

DONATION REPORTS

Donation reports are updated on the 15th and 30/31st of each month. It usually takes our financial team 7–10 days to record donations into our accounting system. If you would like a copy of your donation report, please send an email to your Program Manager. Make sure to indicate the name of your school in all correspondence. We will make every effort to get you the reports requested within 48 hours.

We are working on a system where you will be able to view your reports real-time online. This option should be available by Spring 2017.

FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

Financial statements are automatically sent to programs twice per year. The mid-year report is sent mid to late January and includes a summary of the donations and expenses made between July 1 and December 31. The year-end report is sent mid to late July and includes a summary of all donations and expenses made between July 1 and June 30. Financial statements are also available upon request.

STEP FOUR: FINDING A FOOD VENDOR

After you have raised the designated funds, you will need to secure a food vendor. Many of our programs use a food delivery source such as Sysco, US Foods, or the food provider used by the school. Please contact your PM to determine whether there are established food vendors in your area. You may also choose to work with a local food bank or grocer. The goal is to find a vendor that will be willing to work with you on ordering, delivery/pick up, and pricing.

If you choose to work with a local vendor, please call and arrange a meeting with the manager to explain the BIB program. You will need to agree upon a set menu/pricing and arrange the pickup or delivery schedule (weekly, bi-monthly or monthly) as well as payment options. If you decide to work with Wal-Mart or Sam's Club, BIB will issue a BIB Wal-Mart credit card. Some grocers have in-store account options that are willing to directly bill the BIB national office; please make sure they indicate your school name on all invoicing. BIB can also pre-pay the grocer once the store gives you the balance. The check should be mailed directly to the Program Coordinator who can then take the check with them when purchasing the food.

Blessings in a Backpack does have set menu and pricing with Sysco Foods, Meijer, Optimum Foods and Champion Food Service. Please work with your Program Manager to set up an account with these vendors.

Itemized receipts must be provided for all food purchases, program expenses, and check requests.

Menu Options

Each backpack should contain the following food items:

- Two Entrée Items
- Two Breakfast Items
- Two Healthy Snacks

The menu below provides a list of approved food items. We highly recommend purchasing store and/or generic brands, as these prices are more cost effective. Food items should be single serving and easy to prepare. Canned food items should have pop-tops as not everyone has access to a can opener. Additional food items may be included in the backpacks if funding permits. Please do not include candy, gum, or any foods with nuts.

Blessings in a Backpack has approved menus and pricing with food vendors including Sysco and Meijer. Prepackaged solutions are also available through Optimum Foods and Champion Food Service in select areas. Please check the PC Toolkit for more information or contact your PM.

Approved Menu Items

Breakfast	Entrée	Healthy Snacks
Breakfast Bars	Soups	Fresh fruit
Oatmeal	Canned Meats	Canned fruit
Cereal Bowls (single serving)	Ravioli type products	Cheese Sticks
Grits	Meat Sticks	Raisins
Granola Bars	Canned Beans	Animal Crackers
Fruit & Grain Bars	Canned Vegetables	Cheese & Crackers
	Non-Peanut Spread (Sunbutter, Wow Butter)	Graham Crackers
		Fruit Snacks
		Pudding (2% Milk)
		Applesauce
		100% Juice





Parent Opt-Out Letter

Dear Parent,

Your child is eligible to be a recipient of the Blessings in a Backpack program and once the program is implemented will receive a bag of non-perishable food every Friday. These will be dispensed in a discreet and caring manner. This program runs the full 38-week school year. If you wish for your child to participate in the program you do not need to do anything. There is no cost associated to this program. If you choose to opt out of this program please sign below and return the letter to the school.

Thank you!

Signature

I do not want my child to participate in the Blessings in a Backpack program.

(Spanish version available on BIB website)



Parent Opt-In Letter

Dear Parent,

The Blessings in a Backpack program is available at **SCHOOL NAME**. The program is designed to provide non-perishable food every Friday to children that would benefit from supplemental nourishment over the weekend. Bags will be dispensed in a discreet and caring manner. This program runs the full 38-week school year. There is no cost associated to this program. If you wish for your child to participate in the program please sign below and return the letter to the school.

Thank you!

Signature

I want my child to participate in the Blessings in a Backpack program.

For additional information regarding this program please visit the Blessings in a Backpack website <http://blessingsinabackpack.org/>

(Spanish version available on BIB website)



Program Site Information Form

Your Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone (H): _____

Cell: _____

Email: _____

School Information

School Name: _____

Address: _____

County: _____

Phone: _____

Principal: _____

Email: _____

Number of children to be fed: _____

Estimated Start/End Date of Program: _____

Contact Name for School (if applicable)

Contact Name: _____

Position: _____

Phone Number: _____

Email Address: _____

Grocery Information

Grocery: _____

Contact Name: _____

Position: _____

Phone Number: _____

Email Address: _____



Memorandum of Understanding
Blessings in a Backpack, Inc.
and
Program Coordinator

This Memorandum of Understanding between the Program Coordinator and Blessings in a Backpack, Inc. (BIB) outlines the responsibility and duties of each partner to ensure that the Blessings in a Backpack Adopt a School Program is carried out in a way that is consistent with BIB national policy and supportive to the Program Coordinator. The following MOU will cover:

School: _____
Number of Children: _____
For the following 3 School Years: 2016/2017, 2017/2018 and 2018/2019
Effective Date: _____

BIB will support the Program Coordinator by providing a tool kit to assist with start-up and fundraising. BIB will also assign a dedicated Program Manager to the program that will monitor the program to ensure compliance with BIB national guidelines, provide accurate accounting reports on the program's funding twice per year or upon request, process grocery reimbursements/invoices and ensure delivery of backpacks for every child in the program to a designated location. See page 13 for full list of National Services.

The Program Coordinator will work to build a partnership with a grocer, establish agreed upon pricing and a schedule to obtain, pay for, and transport food. Under no circumstances will s/he use grocery money for items not included on the menu. S/he will ensure backpacks are packed for each child, and enlist volunteer help to achieve program goals. The Program Coordinator will return forms in a timely fashion, including but not limited to: MOU, Program Coordinator Information form, grocery receipts, etc. S/he will apply and secure local grants and provide application information to BIB national. S/he will provide required follow-up and/or reports for grants secured on behalf of their program by the national office. Marketing materials are to be used solely for the purpose of achieving BIB's mission. The Program Coordinator must have one semester of funding before the Blessings in a Backpack program can be initiated in the designated school. Should funds fall short during the school year it is the responsibility of the Program Coordinator to secure or provide funds needed to cover the shortfall. In the unlikely event the program cannot continue, any remaining funds will automatically be distributed to the nearest BIB program.

Blessings national has an insurance policy in place in the event of litigation. To date there have been no instances.

Print Name of Program Coordinator

Signature of Program Coordinator

Date

Signature of Blessings National Program Manager

Date

Blessings National Office Services

Program Implementation Support

- Dedicated Program Manager for your program.
- PC tool kit available via the BIB website.
- Provide bags\drawstrings for the program, at no cost.
- Wal-Mart in store purchasing card system.
- Assists with grocer arrangements.
- National Menus with Meijer and Sysco (delivery where available).

Marketing and Public Relations

- Brand awareness built by National marketing initiatives such as National Blessings in a Backpack Day.
- Highlight local activities on the National website and via social media.
- Press tools to help engage local media.
- Maintain National organization website.
- Monthly email newsletters.

Administrative Support

- Maintain 501c3 (tax exempt) status for donations.
- Independent annual audits and Form 990's, enhancing donor confidence.
- Process financial transactions – receiving and processing donations, grocer payments, reimbursements, etc. Generate donation reports and provide account balances upon request (available the first and 15th of each month).
- General Liability Insurance coverage.
- State Sales Tax Exemption and Solicitation Certificates (select states).
- Manage employee matching gift requests.

Fundraising Support

- Provide fundraising tools, such as templates for solicitation letters, grant proposals, progress reports, and thank you letters.
- Provide fundraising newsletters, which share insights from other BIB volunteers and fundraising best practices.
- Provide online donation system with the National organization incurring all related fees and charges.
- Recognize donor support through a charitable gift receipt sent in the form of a thank you letter with the National organization incurring all postage and processing expenses.
- Acknowledging donors through letters of appreciation, tax receipts, and other methods of recognition.
- Event insurance policy (at cost to the program event).

Please contact Blessings in a Backpack, Inc. with any additional questions:

Office: 502-259-9952

Toll Free: 800-872-4366

Fax: 502-259-9023