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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.

During the 2017-2018 school year, Blessings in a Backpack (Blessings) provided more than 3 million hunger-free weekends for more than 87,000 kids nationwide. With a bag of food in their backpacks as they left school on Friday, these kids had food to fill the 65-hour weekend nutrition gap. Blessings envisions a world where every school-aged child in America has adequate nourishment to learn and grow.

Goals and Accomplishments

Incorporated in 2008 with a goal of providing weekend nutrition to hungry children, Blessings has grown into the only national organization solely dedicated to closing the weekend hunger gap for food insecure students.

In April 2017, Blessings was awarded Charity Navigator’s four-star rating, the highest score possible, due to Blessings’ financial health, accountability, and transparency. In addition to being awarded Charity Navigator’s highest ranking, Blessings is now a GuideStar Platinum organization, the highest level of recognition offered.

To reach this goal and guarantee the organization’s future sustainability, Blessings is focusing on the following four key areas of work in the coming school year:

Unmet Need/ Problem Statement

Most people can’t wait for the weekend. For the 13 million kids across America, and the X in X county, who are food insecure, they can’t wait for it to be over.

A total of X% of kids in Area are income eligible for nutritional programs. During the school week, food insecure students are provided with the nourishment they need from their school’s free and reduced-price meal program, but what happens when school closes its doors on Friday for the weekend? Who will feed the kids this weekend?

 Blessings and XXX will!

Each Friday of the school year, Blessings sends home a bag full of food with children who face food insecurity. Over the past year, Blessings has been working with a national food distributor to help reach the overall objective of providing the best “brain food” possible for students. Working with nutritional advisors, Blessings’ is working to maximize proteins, fibers, and nutrients while minimizing sugars. Kid-friendly foods are selected—individual servings that a child can prepare for themselves without a can opener, microwave, or stove. This food keeps hunger at bay so students can return to school after the weekend feeling nourished and ready to learn.

At such a young age, food insecurity impacts children's health, social development, cognitive growth and general well­being. Ensuring consistent access to nutrition for children allows them to come to school every Monday, focused and ready to learn. Better test scores, expanded reading skills, improved health and increased attendance have all been attributed to consistent childhood nutrition, such as what Blessings’ helps provide.

In addition to no longer feeling weekend hunger, children fed by Blessings have reported the following impact on their lives:

\* 78% feel cared for by their community.

\* 71% feel that blessings is helping their family.

\* 60% report improved school attendance and fewer behavioral issues.

\* 59% find it is easier to learn at school

Description of Services

Blessings sole priority is to provide weekend nutrition throughout the school year to students on the weekend who might otherwise go hungry.

The first major phase of the project is planning, which begins in July. During this time, Blessings’ employees and volunteers work with partner schools to review food menus, finalize relationships with food vendors, identify students in need of the program, recruit more volunteers if needed, and begin fundraising efforts.

 Once school-year planning has occurred and phase one is complete, it is time for phase two. When summer break is over, and students return to school, program implementation at partner schools begins with weekly bag distribution. This phase begins in September and goes through the rest of the school year, ensuring that each student in the program is receiving weekend nutrition throughout the school year. Typically, food is delivered to the school where a team of volunteers packs the food into plastic bags, which teachers then discreetly place into children’s backpacks on Friday.

 The third phase is completing the mid-year reporting. Mid-year reports are distributed electronically to volunteers in December with the Blessings’ team compiling and reviewing them in January, marking the mid-point of the school year. This allows Blessings’ employees and volunteers to evaluate program sites and make any necessary modifications.

 Blessings’ bag distribution ends when school lets out for summer break. Following the school calendar, this occurs in mid-May.

Once the school year has ended, the final phase begins. Blessings’ completes year-end evaluations to see how each program functioned. This reporting is similar to how mid-year reporting works. This step is crucial to see the successes of the program as well as to identify opportunities for growth in the following year. These evaluations are used in next year’s planning as well as communications with our donors to show the impact of their investment.

More Hunger-Free Weekends

Blessings welcomes the opportunity to discuss continuing our partnership together to create more hunger-free weekends a reality for students in need. Please contact me at phone number or email.