



Who will feed the kids this weekend?



## Welcome Back to Blessings!

As fall begins, we look to reap an abundant harvest this 2018-2019 program year from the seeds we have been planting. Blessings in a Backpack continues to grow and evolve. Our ultimate goal is to feed significantly more of the 13 million children in need in the U.S. than we do today. We know one of the best ways to grow is to enhance the ways in which we support YOUR program growth. Whether it be through our rebranding, new food solutions, partnership opportunities such as the Vera Bradley social media campaign, or expanded training we will offer to you, we hope to make your job easier, so you can spend more time promoting your local program to community supporters.

We look forward to partnering with you to feed kids in over 1,000 schools, meeting 100% of the need in your schools, and expanding our reach to even more locations.

**Volunteer Spotlight:**  
Melissa Arch. PC. Marietta. Ga.



## Volunteer Spotlight: Melissa Arch, PC, Marietta, Ga.

Melissa is the program coordinator (PC) of several Blessings in a Backpack programs in Fulton and Cobb Counties, Ga. Her programs currently serve 140 kids every weekend and was featured in Robin Meade's CNN primetime special "Champions for Change" in 2017. [Click here to learn](#) more about Melissa and her growing programs!



## Our New National Food Solution is Ready for You!

This summer, Blessings in a Backpack announced its new national food solution to meet the following goals:

- Make it easier for our programs to purchase and distribute food to the kids regardless of the program size or location. (In a March 2018 survey, over 60% of respondents cited food logistics and pricing as the biggest hurdle to running their program.)
- Ensure nutritional consistency and quality foods across all programs. Allows access to enhanced nutritional versions of foods kids love, often USDA approved for use in school programs, and not available at retail grocers.

[Click here to learn about the solution and how it works.](#)

## Strategic Plan Summary for 2019-2021

In February 2018, our National Board of Directors approved a revised strategic plan for implementation beginning in July 2018. This new strategic plan is intended to support the common shared goal of our Board, staff, program coordinators and other volunteers to end childhood hunger by feeding children on the weekends.

The plan focuses on creating a sustainable and scalable business model supported through six themes: Growth, Fiscal Responsibility, Food Purchasing and Distribution Solutions, Brand Awareness, Human Capital, and Technology.

### What does that mean for you?

For most of our volunteer-driven programs, feeding more kids is hampered primarily by financial constraints. To raise more money, both locally and nationally, together we need to:

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For most of our volunteer-driven programs, feeding more kids is hampered primarily by financial constraints. To raise more money, both locally and nationally, together we need to:

1. Increase awareness of the existence of hungry children (food insecurity) in the U.S. and your own back yard **Brand Awareness**;
2. Establish **Blessings** in a Backpack as the recognized leader in the fight against childhood hunger by feeding children on the weekend **Brand Awareness** so we can;
3. Increase funding streams **Fiscal Responsibility** to:
4. Increase the number of children served and achieve saturation in targeted geographic markets. **Growth**

We also need to simplify our procedures and processes to help you operate as efficiently as possible. We plan to develop improved tools to support human capital—YOU--such as:

1. Online, web-based training tools **Human Capital and Technology**
2. National food solutions **Food Purchasing and Distribution**
3. Creating national partnerships that result in donated packed bags to programs and corporate grants that result in direct funding to local programs. **Fiscal Responsibility, Brand Awareness**

We are eager to share this revised three-year plan overview with you. [Click link to download.](#)

Over the next weeks and months, expect to see continued introduction of new initiatives and tools to support the work you do to feed hungry children.

Please reach out to your dedicated program managers with any questions or comments you might have. We depend on your input and feedback for new solutions and approaches. As a volunteer driven organization, we could not exist if not for all you do. THANK YOU!



## Fundraising Flair: Using the 10th Birthday to Bolster Your Fundraising

People love celebrating milestones. Anniversaries and significant birthdays are causes for celebration, reflection, and, importantly, a time to look to the future. It's easy for you to tap into this excitement and raise more money for your program. As you know, this school year is a special one for **Blessings in a Backpack**. While it may not be your program's 10th year operating, *you can still leverage the organization's 10th birthday for your fundraising.*

This school year, your program should consider including some, if not all, of the following tools when creating a fundraising plan:

- Utilizing Donate Your Birthday
- Ask donors to give more this year in honor of the 10th birthday.
- Host a simple gathering (birthday party!)

[Click here to learn more.](#)

## National **Blessings** in a Backpack Day and Week Recaps



Mayors and government officials across the America filled backpacks with food for students in their communities as a part of the 5th annual "Blessings in a Backpack Day." More than 75 city leaders participated in this national day of awareness, including 55 mayors attending the U.S. Conference of Mayors Fall Leadership Meeting. [Click here to read the story.](#) Thank you to all of our programs that participated in our national day of awareness!



Thank you to everyone who participated in the National **Blessings** in a Backpack Week social media campaign. We had great participation from volunteers, corporate partners, and two of our celebrity supporters — Actress Jennifer Garner and NBA Player Evan Turner.

Go to our [Facebook page](#) for a photo album from the week or [click here to see slideshows](#) from each day.



Actress Sarah Michelle Gellar joined Vera Bradley + Blessings in a Backpack in Los Angeles.

## Vera Bradley Recap

This back-to-school season, Vera Bradley partnered with Blessings to donate 25,000 backpacks to our programs and surprise students at seven schools with a fun carnival filled with games, snacks and of course, a new backpack. Some famous friends who are also passionate about the cause joined in on the fun!

From the campaign, we saw a spike in website visits and volunteer interest forms. We also saw more than 522.7 Million media impressions!

[Check out the recap](#) on our website.

REMINDER that all electronic communications – program websites and social media pages — should be using our new logo and branding by Nov. 1, 2019. [Click here to download](#) the new logos and branding guidelines.

Print and promotional materials should be using the new logo and branding by June 30, 2019.



Tip submitted by Jan Davis, program coordinator, Sacramento, Ca.

## Tip of the Month

We have had several businesses in our area host packing events for us which helps our bottom line in a big way. I reach out to the company and offer them the opportunity to hold a team builder that also benefits children in our community. I email them our menu and will highlight specific items if we are in need. The company shops for the food and we show up to help them pack the bags. It's also a great time for us to answer questions and share upcoming fundraisers. Several of the companies have also delivered the bags to our eight schools which helps us immensely and gives them an even better sense of what we are doing.