



# BLESSINGS IN A BACKPACK

*Who will feed the kids this weekend?*



## 2018-2019 Impact Report



# THANK YOU

This school year, Blessings in a Backpack provided over 3 million hunger-free weekends for more than 87,000 kids nationwide because of YOUR generous support.

As a donor, you know that Blessings mobilizes communities, individuals, and resources to provide food on the weekends for elementary school children across America who might otherwise go hungry. But, you might not know why it got started . . .

In 2005, Missy Hammerstrom was visiting an elementary school in Louisville, Ky., for a community project. She was eating lunch when a little girl asked for Missy's apple. Missy asked if she didn't eat enough in the lunchroom. The girl said, "No. I'm taking it home so I can eat it this weekend."

Missy was heartbroken by the thought that kids in her community were going home hungry.

That night, she drove to the store and purchased every backpack that she could find. She filled those backpacks with food, and donated the backpacks to the school. At that moment, Blessings was born.



Missy Hammerstrom



Missy's family in Sept. 2018

Sadly, Missy passed away in 2010, but her legacy lives on every Friday of the school year when volunteers send kids home with backpacks full of food.

On Sept. 28, 2018, Missy's family joined Blessings staff and Engelhard Elementary volunteers and staff to pack more than 400 bags of weekend food. The Hammerstrom family was recognized with a proclamation from Louisville Mayor Greg Fischer declaring Sept. 29, 2018, "Melissa Hammerstrom Day."



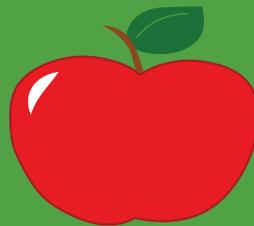
# BY THE NUMBERS

The first Blessings in a Backpack program began at Roosevelt Perry Elementary School in Louisville, Ky., in 2005. Three years later, in 2008, Blessings became a national 501(c)(3) charity organization and expanded its efforts to feed kids on the weekends across the country. The numbers below show the tremendous growth of Blessings in a Backpack over a decade.

## NOW AND THEN: GROWTH FROM 2009 TO 2019



Kids Served  
9,022 | 87,000



Hunger-Free Weekends  
315,770 | 3 million

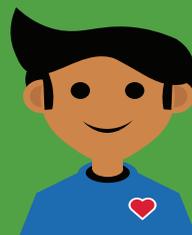


States Served  
1 | 45\*

\*includes Washington D.C.



Program Locations  
38 | 1,090



Volunteers  
380 | 10,900



Donations  
4,340 | 22,800

Blessings in a Backpack has provided more than hunger-free weekends these past ten years. Through our bags of food, we've helped kids all over the country overcome challenges, thrive in the present, and look towards a brighter future.



# 10TH BIRTHDAY

When Blessings in a Backpack kicked off its 10th birthday year in the fall of 2018, we set out to celebrate a decade of feeding kids on the weekends. Our goal was to honor, recognize, and celebrate all of the people – volunteers, donors, teachers, and kids – who helped us grow from Missy's garage to the only national organization dedicated solely to ending childhood hunger on the weekends.

**38 NATIONAL  
BIRTHDAY BASHES**

**725+ PARTY GUESTS**

**2,000 HOSTESS  
CUPCAKES ENJOYED**



# GROWING AND THRIVING

A significant part of our year-long birthday celebration was the opportunity to reconnect with Blessings stakeholders, and that includes the kids whom we serve.

During a birthday party at Engelhard Elementary School in Louisville, Ky., we were excited to see LaRon, a boy we first met in the fall of 2015. His mom, Ashley, was featured in a video about Blessings in a Backpack in which she shared how grateful she was for the program and the food that her son brought home on Fridays.

*“It’s more than just filling a belly. To some it’s joy, to some it’s peace, to some I’m sure it’s caring for their families and communities and the world... for me Blessings in a Backpack is all of the above.”*

— Ashley Carter, small business owner and LaRon’s Mom

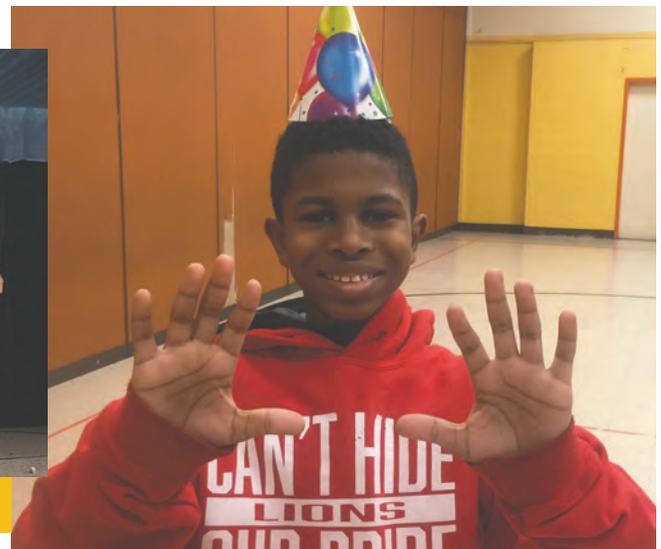
We got to know LaRon and Ashley even better when they flew to Chicago to participate in the 2016 Northwestern University Dance Marathon (NUDM). LaRon had never been on an airplane before, and we soon learned of his love for planes, rocket ships, and submarines. He also loves to entertain. While the intention was for Ashley to speak to more than 1,000 NUDM dancers, imagine our surprise when LaRon joined her on stage and break danced to overwhelming applause!

LaRon graduates from elementary school in May 2019, and next year he will be attending a prestigious all-boys academy in Louisville. The Blessings Team is proud of LaRon and his accomplishment, and we’re happy to have played a role in helping him prepare for the future.

We were delighted to share our 10th birthday with LaRon, his friends, and thousands of kids across the country. We look forward to helping even more kids thrive for years to come.



Top: LaRon and Ashley in 2016 at NUDM  
Right: LaRon in 2019



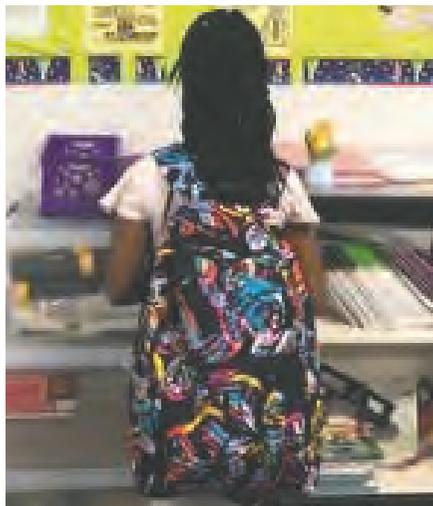
# MORE THAN A BACKPACK

During back-to-school season, Vera Bradley partnered with Blessings in a Backpack to donate 25,000 backpacks together. The Vera Bradley and Blessings Teams traveled across the country to select schools to surprise students with celebrity visits, carnival games, inflatables, and, of course, Vera Bradley backpacks!



Celebrities Jason and Brittany Aldean, Raelyn, Shawn Johnson East, and Andrew East join Vera Bradley Founder Barbara Bradley Baekgaard at a back-to-school carnival with Blessings in a Backpack and Vera Bradley in Nashville.

Shortly after one of the events, Florida volunteer Kay Boehart shared the ripple effect of the Vera Bradley backpack for a 3rd-grade Blessings recipient at her school. The girl's family is homeless, and they sleep in a car at night. Kay told us:



*"We usually have warm weather in Florida at this time of year; however, tonight and tomorrow are going to be extremely cold for us. [The girl's] beautiful Vera Bradley butterfly backpack will be her pillow tonight and hold her clothing tomorrow. I want to say 'thank you' for providing these special backpacks for our students in need. You never know how the backpack may be used, but know it's put a smile on this sweet girl's face!"*



# A NEW LOOK

In July 2018, Blessings rolled out a new logo, tagline, and look to shape our organization as a national front-runner in the fight against childhood hunger on the weekends. The logo is a visual representation of what we do—send kids home with backpacks full of food on Fridays. We chose the color red because it's warm, urgent, and attracts more attention than any other color. The backpack is highlighted with a heart to symbolize the caring nature of our organization and volunteers. The tagline defines who we are, what we do, and when we do it, and creates a call-to-action.

*Who will feed the kids this weekend?  
I will!*

In addition to a new look, we equipped volunteers with digital and print ads, creative tools, and branded resources to promote and fundraise for their programs locally. Nationally, we rolled out successful, well-received campaigns through social media, email, and direct mail.



*She thought the coolest thing she ever did was cash a winning ticket at the Kentucky Derby.*

*Until she filled a backpack.*

It's true. There's nothing much more exhilarating than cheering a horse to victory in the Kentucky Derby. But if you've ever filled a backpack with food so a kid can eat over the weekend, you know how exhilarating that is. And the incredible difference it makes in the lives of hungry kids.

Over 13 million kids in America don't have food to eat on the weekends. But you can help change that. **Yes, you.**

So put down that racing form and join us. Do the coolest thing ever. Find us at [blessingsinabackpack.org](http://blessingsinabackpack.org).





**Thank you for being a part of our first ten years!  
We look forward to partnering with you to make hunger-free  
weekends a reality for kids for years to come.**

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