



Welcome!



Who is in the room?



Cigna's Healthier Kids for Our  
Future initiative



**Cynthia Ryan**

**Human Resources Officer**

**Cigna**



**Session #1:**  
**Navigating the new normal**  
**in the time of COVID**



Claire Bloom

Founder

End 68 Hours of Hunger

# Let's Go Back in Time.....



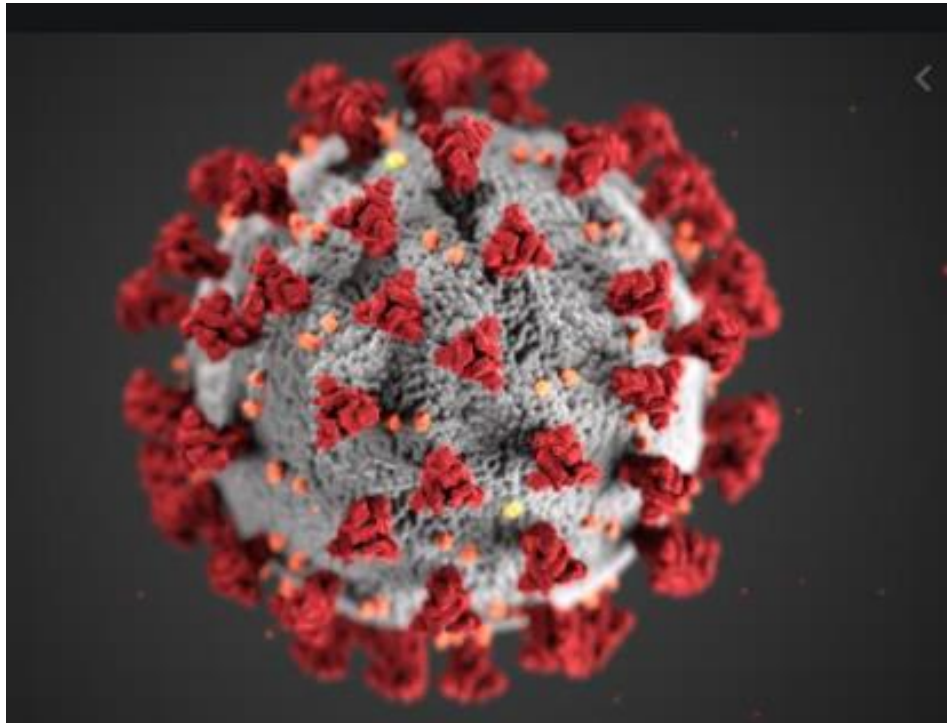
In February 2020 we were feeding 4,500 children every weekend as we always had been:

- Volunteers buying food from grocery stores in bulk
- Volunteers packing bags of non perishable food, enough for seven meals, and delivering those bags to schools
- School personnel delivering the bags to students

# In March, 2020, COVID hit the US



- Two things happened, at the same time, that dramatically impacted our operations





# The Great Toilet Paper Run

- Stores, out of an abundance of caution, limited the number of ANY individual items we could purchase.
- When a program is feeding 600 children each weekend, being limited to 1 jar of peanut butter each trip means nothing!



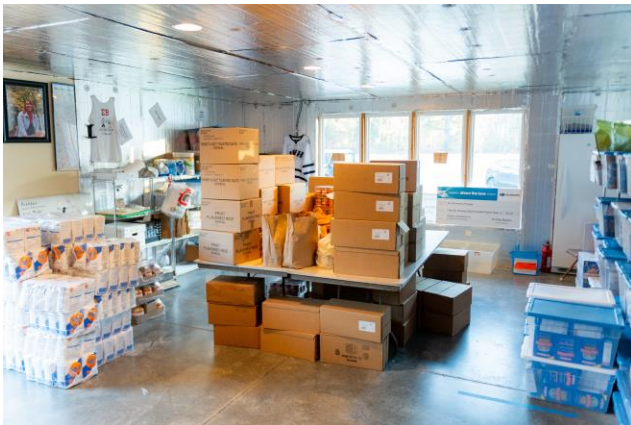
# School Closures

- Every single school shut down
- Since our distribution is anonymous, and is executed through the school system, we totally lost access to the students!



# Challenges:

1. Replace our suppliers
2. Get access to the students
3. Keep our volunteers safe!



# Replacing our Suppliers

- Developed a contract with US Foods to deliver food directly to our warehouses



- Reached out to our donors requesting food donations instead of funds

- Developed a policy to distribute grocery store gift cards instead of food



## Getting access to the Students

- This had to happen at the same time as we were developing new sources of food
- We developed a network of drop off locations, and school personnel contacted each family to tell them where they could get their food
- We got a donation of \$15,000 to develop an add on to our website to allow parents to register their children for home delivery
- Within four weeks we had children registered for home delivery and drop off locations identified

# Numbers remained roughly the same

- We expected a much greater increase in demand than we actually experienced. Some programs increased 300% in the first few weeks, but then went back down to normal levels
- Some decreased and then went back up to normal levels
- A couple closed entirely either because there were no volunteers to deliver or no drop off locations

# Keeping Volunteers SAFE

- Of course we excused any volunteers who were uncomfortable with participating
- We recruited new volunteers and developed volunteer bubbles, people in the same family or same work group, signed them up for an hour at a time, and sanitized between groups
- We maintained contact records and no one got ill





## Most of what we developed can and will continue

- There are still a couple of programs using the gift cards, but most are back to some form of delivery
- The registration site will remain live
- The contracts will remain in place although we may not need to use them
- The safety precautions will remain in place until no longer needed



# Surprises?

- The most surprising thing of all was the enormous donation of funds which came in big clumps from all kinds of donors
- We had always anticipated that in a crisis donations would go down but in fact there was a nearly 100% increase. Every month looked like December!
- These have now dropped back to normal levels.





Nancy Major

Managing Director

Blessings in a Backpack  
Waukesha Co., WI

# Blessings view

## The onset of COVID

- Initial guidance March 13, 2020: "***If*** your schools shuts down..."
- If we only knew...

## Getting food to kids when schools were shut-down

- Grab and Go Sites
- School bus distributions
- Community partners like Boys and Girls Clubs, park districts, etc.

## Supply chain challenges

- Shortage of single-serving items as manufacturers switched for family size
- Manufacturer safety practices shut lines down periodically

# Blessings view



## **Ensuring the safety of volunteers: impact on packing bags**

- Packing guidance and safety standards issued by national office
- Experience in Waukesha, WI on the ground

## **Fundraising during COVID**

- Generosity of donors
- Impact on previously scheduled fundraising events



# Blessings view



## COVID-driven changes that will have lasting impact

- Prepacks to feed more kids
- Diversified revenue sources



# QUESTIONS?



## **Session #2:**

**Into the backpack: nourishing our  
children**

Heather dambrosi

Vice president, food solutions

Blessings in a Backpack



# Why do we need nutrition?

- Establishing healthy eating behaviors in children is important as they tend to continue into adult years
- Children need healthy food to fuel their growth and learning. Children that receive proper nutrition can learn better and have fewer behavioral issues
- 41% of children and adolescents are overweight or have obesity which can lead to serious health concerns later in life (i.e. high blood pressure, type 2 diabetes, and cardiovascular disease)

# Dietary Guidelines

- Dietary Guidelines for Americans are developed by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the US Department of Health & Human Services (HSS) to provide recommendations to promote health and wellness and help reduced the risk of chronic disease
- 2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans recommends that people aged 2 and older should follow a healthy dietary pattern that includes;
  - Nutrient dense foods and beverages
  - Fruits and vegetables in a variety of colors
  - Whole grains, at least 50% of your grain intake
  - Fat free and low-fat dairy products
  - Variety of protein foods
  - Healthy oils
- The Dietary Guidelines also recommends limiting food and beverages high in added sugars, saturated fats, sodium and limit alcoholic beverages

# What is our impact?

- In 2018 over 11 million children lived in food-insecure homes. Due to our nation's pandemic closures, loss of employment, and access to healthy food, research predicts over 18 million children face food insecurity
- Children have access to nutritious school meals Monday through Friday through federal government programs
- Blessings in a Backpack feeds almost 90,000 children nation wide providing essential nutrition during the weekend who might otherwise go hungry

# USDA Funding-how do we fit in?

## USDA National School Lunch and Breakfast Program

- Breakfast provides 1/4 of the Recommended Daily Allowance for nutrients (350-500 calories)
- Lunch provides 1/3 of the Recommended Daily Allowance for nutrients (550-650 calories)

## Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP)

- Provides meals for children enrolled in day cares, group homes, and adult day care programs
- School districts provide 'supper/dinner' programs under CACFP guidelines
  - No nutrition (calories) requirements, must meet food components only (1 bread, 2 proteins, 3/4cup fruit/veg, milk)

# USDA Waivers

- Due to the pandemic USDA issued waivers to provide school districts flexibility to feed children
  - All children eat free regardless of their economic status
  - Non-congregate feeding (students do not have to be present to eat or receive their meal)
    - Allows districts to provide food for multiple days (including weekends if they choose)
- Waivers are currently in place through June 2022

# Nutrition Standards

- Menu items must be kid-friendly, ready to eat, and do not require any kitchen appliances or hot water
- We are unsure of the child's home situation and cannot assume a young child can operate a stove or microwave without supervision
- Items we try to avoid
  - Food items that need to be heated or cooked
  - Food items that require a can opener or have sharp edges
  - Items that contain peanuts
  - Non-shelf stable items
  - Bulk items packaged by volunteers

# Nutrition Standards



- We include a minimum of the following items for each child
  - 2 protein items (i.e beef jerky, sunflower seeds, cheese stick)
  - 2 breakfast items (i.e cereal, cereal bar)
  - 1-2 crackers (i.e honey grahams, goldfish, cheez its)
  - 1-2 fruit (i.e raisins, craisins, 100% juice box, fruit cup)
- We purchase items that have been pre-approved for the USDA breakfast and lunch program to ensure nutrition quality
- Manufacturers produce products specifically for schools that are not available retail

# Pre-pack Nutrition

## Protein

- Protein is an important part of your diet for growth and development acting as a building block of bones, muscles, cartilage, and skin. Protein is also needed to build and repair tissue. Eating foods high in protein also makes you feel full for longer.
- Pre-pack kits all contain a minimum of 2 protein sources and a minimum of 26gm of protein per kit.

## Whole Grain

- Whole grain includes all 3 components of the grain (bran, endosperm, and germ) and are packed with important nutrients including fiber, protein, and B vitamins. Research shows eating whole grains in place of refined grains (white flour) lowers the risk of many chronic diseases.
- Our pre-pack kits contain good sources of whole grains (cereal, cereal bars, and crackers).

## Sodium

- Following a low sodium diet is important to reduce the risk of heart related diseases.
- Our pre-packs contain items that are lower in sodium such as Chicken Beef Jerky that only has 180mg of sodium.



# Pre-pack Benefits

## **Nutrition Integrity**

- Menu items are evaluated by a Registered Dietitian to provide low sugar, high protein, lower in sodium, and made with whole grain products
- When available we purchase clean label products avoiding high fructose corn syrup, MSG, and artificial colors and flavors
- Menu items are pre-packaged and contain ingredient and allergen information

## **Cost Control**

- Combining total purchases through a bid process results in more competitive pricing
- Foodservice case quantities are larger than retail packs which allows for cheaper pricing per portion

## **Food Safety**

- Pre-packs are packaged and tamper-proof minimizing touchpoints
- Better control on inventory in the event of a food recall

# QUESTIONS?



**Session #2:**

**Into the backpack:**

**The power of we**

Collaborating in an Ever-Changing Environment



Jim Agnew

**Senior Principal Consultant**

**Expense Reduction Analysts**

# Collaboration Comes in Many Forms

- Sharing of ideas / thoughts
- Creative collaboration
- Leadership conferences
- Legal / political activities
  
- Menu planning / development
- Procurement / sourcing
- Combining resources across common support activities

# The Value of Collaborating is Not a New Concept

"I can do things you cannot. You can do things I cannot. Together we can do great things."

– Mother Teresa

"Coming together is a beginning, staying together is progress, and working together is success."

– Henry Ford

"Success happens when good people with good intentions cooperate and work together over a shared interest."

– Meg Whitman

## Collaboration Has One Requirement

The willingness to move from "Me" to  
"We".....

# Why Work Together?

## **Scale economies or “purchasing power”**

The most obvious advantage of purchasing as a group is the economy of scale. The volume of the aggregated purchases gives individual businesses access to economies not available separately. The resulting purchasing power generates leverage, which, in turn, yields cost improvement.

## **Process economies**

When organizations come together, they can share information about suppliers, new technologies and market knowledge – resulting in reduced redundancy in the supply chain, lower transaction costs, and increased process economies.

## **Positive financial impact for each individual networked company**

A reduction in purchasing costs can often impact an organization's bottom line more than increasing revenue. Savings generated by purchasing as a network will increase funds available to each individual organization without having to increase revenues.



# Why Don't Organizations Work Together?

## **We Do Things Differently**

The single largest obstacle to cooperation among organizations is an unshakable belief in the "absolute uniqueness" of each entity. The fact is that true uniqueness is seldom achieved, and the perception of uniqueness is often rooted in simple differences in process, policy, approach, or perspective.

## **Loss of "Independence"**

The most often cited reason for not joining a purchasing group – or combining forces with another entity – is having to "give in to the group".

## **The Inability To Move From "Me" to "We"**

An organization can get so firmly entrenched in "our way" that it can completely lose sight of opportunities to improve, particularly when the idea is not internally generated.

## **Comfort is "Comfortable"**

"The devil you know is better than the devil you don't"

# Opportunities to Investigate

Among the many organizations dedicated to the cause of feeding food-insecure children, there are clear opportunities to work together to provide more for less:

Identifying child-friendly products with specific nutritional objectives

- Meat sticks
- Fruit snacks
- Cereals , crackers

Working with sources to increase volumes, decrease supply chain costs, improve turns, lower unit costs

- Manufacturer price support
- Distribution channels – national or regional
- Specialty products (Shelf-stable, prepackaged kits, etc.)
- Common packaging to provide marketing impact at an affordable cost

# Food for Thought...

So,

- Are we all really that different?
- Could we find common ground in our common purpose?
- Is moving from "Me" to "We" really that difficult?

"When people come together in a collaborative effort to achieve a shared goal, the dynamic can inspire greater creativity and productivity, which typically leads to better results." - Andrew Carnegie

# Food for Thought...

Now what?

Today is not about sudden change; but, about openness to change. What we do from here is up to each one of us.

Do we:

- just go home and carry on?
- carefully consider alternatives / options to how we do business today?

Can we:

- find benefits in working together?
- see the value in collaboration?
- set aside the present and look to the future?

“Many ideas grow better when transplanted into another mind than the one where they sprang up.” – Oliver Wendell Holmes

## The Power of “We” ...

Gettin' good players is easy. Gettin' 'em to play together  
is the hard part.  
-Casey Stengel

# QUESTIONS?



**Sessions #3:**

**The Effectiveness of Backpack Programs**

**Battling Hunger in America**

Rob Williams

President and founder

Every meal



# Session overview

## Background:

- WSJ article on backpack programs: has anything changed?
- Backpack Programs and the Crisis Narrative of Child Hunger--A Critical Review... [of an] Untested Model

Discuss criticisms and alternative points of view

Why do backpack programs receive funding from sophisticated donors in light of noted criticisms?

Next steps?



# Program function:

**Target children in need by school staff, parents or those receiving Free and Reduced Meals**

## **Potential Positive Consequences:**

- High proportion of child with hunger receive BPPs

## **Potential Negative Consequences:**

- Low specificity (i.e. high proportion of children w/out hunger receive BPPs)
- Many children receive BPPs who will not benefit
- Inefficiency

## **Mitigating Methods/Solutions:**

- No selection of students. Enrollment forms used. Parents decide opt-in/opt-out
- No qualification requirements (EM)
- Teachers/guidance counselors identify kids in need if not 100% participation (B)

# Program function:



## Impact generated on household

### Potential Positive Consequences:

- Augmenting of household food supply

### Potential Negative Consequences:

- Undermining of parental authority and decision making, family dynamics, diet quality

### Mitigating Methods/Solutions:-

- Parents decide if the food is helpful for their child and/or family
- Food is not intended to be only consumed by the child, but rather a support for the whole family

# Program function:

## Impact generated on children

### Potential Positive Consequences:

- Food provided to a small number of children who would otherwise go hungry

### Potential Negative Consequences:

- Stigma, shame and anxiety
- Poor food quality resulting in poor diet control and possible overweight
- Undermining of confidence in parents
- Food provided to many children who would not go hungry.

### Mitigating Methods/Solutions:-

- Discrete distribution of backpacks unless 100% of kids served
- Focus on nutritious, delicious and relevant food
- Parents decide if food is helpful to their family and provide positive feedback
- Schools report positive impact on a number of attributes

# Program function:



## Impact generated schools

### Potential Positive Consequences:

- Possible opportunity for engagement with children and families
- Heightened awareness of food insecurity and hunger

### Potential Negative Consequences:

- Undermining school efforts to eliminate marking of children's socioeconomic status and reduce stigma
- Diverts school staff time away from other responsibilities
- Storage and management of food disruptive to school

### Mitigating Methods/Solutions:-

- Children's identifies are maintained by the school and not given to others
- Minimal school staff time or storage/management is required
- Schools report increased connection and relationships with families & community

Cecilia St. Arnold

Managing Director

Blessings in a Backpack  
Southwest, Fl

# Funders perspectives

## **Blessings in a Backpack Southwest Florida**

- Blessings' first formal chapter, established in 2014. Previously, an exclusively volunteer-led program with a local board since 2009
- Continuing growth from sophisticated community funders including:
  - United Way
  - Community Foundations
  - Family Foundations
  - Local Government
  - Local Businesses
- All these funders require outcomes to our programs: we define the need, outcomes and impact of our programs
- Logic model shared with today's sophisticated donors

Nationally, Ipsos surveys (3<sup>rd</sup> party) measure impact of programs

# Next steps?

## Group Discussion

- What other perspectives do you have that provide a contrary point of view to the article?
- Any action we want to consider as a group?



# QUESTIONS?

# Let's celebrate what we do!





Thank you!