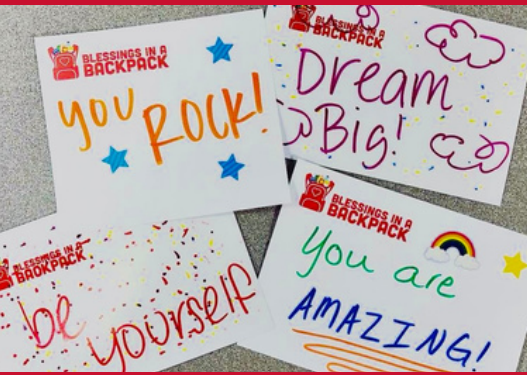




## OUR MISSION

Blessings in a Backpack mobilizes communities, individuals, and resources to provide food on the weekends for school-age children across America who might otherwise go hungry.



## OUR 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.

# HOW BLESSINGS STARTED

In 2005, Missy Hammerstrom was visiting an elementary school in Louisville, Kentucky, for a community project. She was eating lunch when a little girl asked for Missy's apple. Missy asked the girl 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 hungry. That night she drove to the store and purchased every backpack that she could find. She filled those backpacks with food and donated them to the school. That weekend, Missy fed 30 kids and Blessings in a Backpack was born.

Today, Blessings in a Backpack is a nationally known organization, feeding over 88,000 kids on the weekends throughout the weekend in 44 states.

*"Thank you so much for my backpack. I love getting the food and sharing it with my little sister." -Elementary school student*

# QUICK FACTS

As little as \$4 can provide a bag of ready-to-eat food for one weekend

Projected 13 million children face food insecurity; estimated one in six children

During the 2020-2021 school year, we provided 2.2 million hunger-free weekends for children nationwide

1,000+ program locations in 44 states and Washington, D.C.

Blessings is volunteered-powered with over 5,000 volunteers making the magic happen, supported by only 35 staff members

As little as \$130 feeds a child for a school year





# FOOD DRIVE INSTRUCTIONS

**Step 1.** Work with a dedicated staff member to identify a Blessings program in your area to receive the food items/bags.

**Step 2.** Determine if you will be solely collecting food or if you would like to organize a team of volunteers to pack the food into bags.

**Step 3.** Connect with the local volunteer team to coordinate preferred food items/menus, event details, and delivery of food to the program site. If you are creating food bags with the collected food, invite a volunteer from the local Blessings team to talk about their program. If you decide to do an online shopping experience, you can utilize Amazon Wish List and work with the local volunteer program coordinator to determine wish list needs.

**Step 4.** Set a goal for your event! Whether it is the number of individual food items collected or food bags packed, having a goal will help pave the way for a successful event.

**Step 5.** Announce the food drive or packing event. This can be accomplished through social media, organization websites, email, and other sources. Make sure to include all details of the collection or event.

**Step 6.** If you are setting up food bins for collection, create a flyer that includes the start and end dates, the list of food items needed, and who the food drive will benefit. Include information on Blessings in a Backpack and how a donor can make a monetary donation

**Step 7.** Update participants on the amount of food and funds you've collected and be sure to take pictures! Be sure to thank your donors and participants.

**Step 8.** Once the food drive or packing event is over, contact the local volunteer team to schedule a time to deliver your donations.

**Step 9.** We would love to hear about your event! Go to [blessingsinabackpack.org/food-drive](https://blessingsinabackpack.org/food-drive) to share information about your drive, including the value of donated food. By sharing this information, we can ensure your efforts are included in our reporting as we strive to provide more than three million bags of weekend food this school year. Every bag counts!

**All monetary donations received should be mailed to:**  
BIB Bank Lockbox, P.O. Box 950291, Louisville, KY 40295

# BACKPACK PROGRAM NEEDS

We provide our children with nutritious, kid-friendly, ready-to-eat food items each weekend. We are unsure of the child's home situation, so we provide items that require minimal preparation and avoid the use of kitchen appliances such as a can opener. Collected food must be packaged in a sealed container or pouch with ingredients listed. Please inspect all food for any dents or damage and ensure that expiration dates are within 30 days.

Each weekend food bag should contain a minimum of six shelf stable food items, from the menu below, including:

- Two entrée items (i.e., cheese cup, meat stick, pasta bowl, soup)
- Two breakfast items (i.e., cereal bowl, granola bar)
- Two healthy snacks (i.e., crackers, fruit cup, sunflower seeds)

## APPROVED MENU ITEMS

- Individual cereal bowls/boxes
- Cereal/Granola bars
- Shelf-stable yogurt or milk packages
- Fruit pouches or cups
- Juice boxes (100% juice only)
- Sunflower seeds
- Meat sticks (i.e., Jack Links, Slim Jim)
- Individual packaged crackers (i.e., Cheez-Its, Goldfish Cheddar Crackers, Animal Crackers)
- Pretzels or popcorn
- Raisins or craisin packets
- Chef Boyardee (or generic brand) ready-to-eat pasta bowls (pop-top lids required)
- Ready-to-eat soup (pop-top lids required)



**BLESSINGS IN A  
BACKPACK**



## FOOD ITEMS TO AVOID

Because we are unsure of the home situation and cannot assume a young child can operate a stove or microwave without supervision and we cannot assume that they have access to basic kitchen appliances, such as a can opener, we avoid sending the following items.

- Bulk items that require further packaging (i.e., bulk cereal re-packaged in individual bag/containers)
- Food items prepared by an individual or group (food items must be packaged in a sealed container by the manufacturer)
- Due to allergies, avoid any products that contain peanuts. The Food & Drug Administration (FDA) requires food manufacturers to list the major 8 allergens on the ingredient label.
- Applesauce cups with the foil lids. We have experienced issues with foil lids leaking. Choose pouch applesauce instead.
- Fresh produce items that bruise easily (i.e., berries, bananas, peaches)
- Canned products. Choose products with a pop-top lid or pouches.
- Items high in sodium (i.e., ramen noodles, greater than 100mg per package)
- Perishable items
- Candy, gum, or food of no nutritional value

**For additional volunteer engagement opportunities, please  
check our website at [blessingsinabackpack.org](https://blessingsinabackpack.org)**