



What is the Backpack Program?

The Backpack Program is a nationwide program of Feeding America, which is operated and coordinated by individual Feeding America food banks (like the Community Food Warehouse.) The Backpack Program feeds hungry school children on weekends. Eligible children deemed to be chronically hungry receive nutritious and child friendly food items for the weekends, throughout the school year. Without this program, these children would come to school hungry on Monday.

Each food bank must adhere to Feeding America core standards, but are free to individualize and create their own program and partnerships. Program participants are selected by means of eligibility criteria for determining chronic hunger. The school principal, nurse, teachers and support staff all have input into the child's eligibility. Most of these children are already participants in the government's free lunch program.

Three school districts currently pack on-site at the Community Food Warehouse, and five additional school districts belong to our program, but pack off-site. We currently serve over 830 students through our program.

What kind of food do the kids receive?

The bags are filled with child-friendly, shelf-stable/non-perishable, and easily consumable food and are pre-packed by volunteers in plastic bags. Utmost care is given in selecting nutritious food items. Participants receive enough food for 4 meals which include 100% fruit juices, shelf stable milk, cereal, fruit cups, protein entrees, and healthy snacks such as fresh fruit (when available), fruit and grain bars, raisins, and various other snacks items. Each bag contains two entrees, two juices, two shelf stable milks, two cereals, two fruits/fruit cups, and three snacks. Distribution is handled discreetly by school staff to maintain confidentiality- the bags are the perfect size to fit into an elementary school student's backpack!

Which schools in Mercer County are part of the program?

Commodore Perry, Greenville, Lakeview, Reynolds, Sharon, Sharpsville, West Middlesex, and Wilmington (technically only one of their schools is in Mercer County, but we serve several of their elementary/middle schools) are all part of the Community Food Warehouse's Backpack Program.

How can I help?

Without the support of our local churches, generous donations of time, and financial support from members of our community, we would not be able to run the Backpack Program. Currently, it costs \$225 per child for the entire school year. This provides food to the child for 36 weekends throughout the school year. 100% of donations to the Backpack Program are used to purchase the food for the program.

If you are interested in donating your time to pack, or if you or your organization would like to sponsor children for the Backpack program, please contact:

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