

Feeding America Backpack Program

Description of Program: The backpack program was initiated in the summer of 2009 to provide our children with food on the weekends and before holiday breaks. Once a week, bags are filled with child friendly, non perishable foods. The food is selected to include something from each food group. Staples such as peanut butter, shelf stable milk and individual fruit cups or fruit juice are provided to our children along with other foods that require little to no preparation. We often provide individually packaged dried fruit, granola bars, vitamin enriched fruit snacks and cans of soup.

In the event of a holiday break or the center being closed an extra day for the weekend, bags are filled with extra food to supplement the additional day.

Occasionally, personal hygiene items such as soap, shampoo and deodorants are given away. Nursing and Health & Nutrition interns create information handouts, games and worksheets to be given out with the bags. Items included in the backpacks are selected each week by the educational coordinator. Volunteers and children help fill the bags each week.

Over the past year, the program has evolved. Originally bags were handed out to a smaller group, but as the need increased, the program was opened up for every child that attends the youth center. Currently we are providing food to any child that requests a bag. Since the program has become more inclusive, we are now giving away an average of 70 bags a week.

In 2011 we gave away 4561 bags of food to our school age children and our preschool.

Other Feeding Programs:

After School children: Our after school children are served a snack and dinner every day, Mon-Fri. In 2011, we served 18,409 meals and snacks to our children.

Preschool Children: Our preschool children are served breakfast, first snack, lunch, second snack and dinner every day, Mon-Fri. In 2011, we served 14,909 meals and snacks to our preschool children.

Desired Outcomes:

- Elimination of food insecurity for children in need.
- Attentions in the children will be improved with the children not having to stress over not being able to eat.
- Children have healthy bodies, healthy minds and good chances to become productive members of society.
- Grades will improve.