



Healthy Kids Network Backpack Program

-About the Program

The Healthy Kids Network (HKN) Backpack Program addresses the basic needs of students in Licking County by providing carriers of nutritious and easy-to-prepare food to take home on weekends when other resources may not be available. While free and reduced breakfast and lunch are available during the school week, unreliable access to food over the weekends can affect the level of food insecurity experienced by the student, increasing stress and decreasing productivity. Children who are hungry simply cannot concentrate to learn, have low energy, and reduced ability to fight off common childhood illnesses.



HKN launched the Back Pack Pilot Program in January 2015. 65 elementary students in one Newark school were served 4-meals and it has continued to expand. In 2017, the program will be at 15 Licking County Elementary schools and serve 450 students per week.

There are several advantages in the way the Backpack Program addresses the needs of hungry children:

- Referrals are made by Teacher, School Social Worker, Administrator, School Health Aide, and other staff who are in a position to identify hungry children.
- Children are not stigmatized because the food is given to them discretely.
- Food gets directly and immediately into the hands of hungry children.
- Children receive food that is appropriate for them to eat and meets many nutritional requirements.
- Children receive food with no questions asked and without bureaucratic requirements.

-How We Are Helping

PRESBYTERIAN PARTNERSHIP

Granville First Hanover Newark First Newark Second Outville Woodside

Six Presbyterian churches from Licking County started to form a partnership that would allow us to work together in the community for good. We decided early on that this partnership would be based on a shared mission. The Y- Healthy Kids Network became that shared mission. It fit what we are trying to do so well. The mission feeds hungry children in each of our towns, and it helps children learn. By working with this program we are also able to help: wonderful organizations do more like the local schools, the Food Pantry Network, and the YMCA.

We are helping by providing space for food storage, providing volunteers who will run logistical coordination, food organization, food packaging and delivery services. We are also working in order to raise funds to help support the program. All of these involvements are aimed at helping this program expand so that one day it is available to all 25 elementary schools in Licking County.

HOW THE PROGRAM WORKS:

Phase One: Filling Basic Food Packs

Community volunteer groups pack foods that provide approximately six meals for a youth for the weekend. The buying power of the Food Pantry Network of Licking County is used, thus the pack costs \$2.84 per student. Approximately 2,000 packs are assembled monthly.

The packed foods plus supplemental foods will be moved for storage to the Annex of the Newark First Presbyterian Church.

Phase Two: Distributing Foods Schools

The Presbyterian Partnership will be responsible for distribution as arranged with the Food Pantry Network of Licking County.

Phase Three: Filling Individual Back Packs to Go Home Weekly

Volunteers are needed for each school building.

Phase Four: Teachers and other school employees bring the bags to the students who need them. The students bring the empty bag back the following week and the whole cycle starts over for the following week

-How You Can Be Involved

Volunteers are needed at all stages of the process. Volunteers are needed to unload deliveries of food from the Food Pantry Network into First Presbyterian's building. Volunteers are then needed to pack the food in to individual bags that go into boxes and are stored until they need delivered to the schools. Volunteers are needed to transport the boxes of prepacked food to the individual schools. Volunteers are needed to put the prepacked foods into individual backpacks for the students adding any perishable food items.

You can also be involved by helping to coordinate volunteers, organize the food storage, or support the program with your finances. Finances can be donated to any of the 6 local churches or to the Licking County Family YMCA. Checks can be made out to the church you are sending the funds to or the Licking County Family YMCA. Funds should be clearly marked for the Y Healthy Kids Network.

Help is needed year round. Food begins to arrive at First Presbyterian in late July. Food is packed and delivered each week throughout the school year.

Contact any of the 6 church offices for more details or questions.

email: firstpresnewark@gmail.com