

# BackPack Program Overview



## Mission

Mid-Ohio Foodbank's BackPack program aims to bridge the gap between free and reduced meals at school and the weekend for food insecure children and their families. Through partnerships with schools and afterschool programs, we provide simple to prepare, nutritious foods at the end of the week to address a very critical period of hunger for children: weekends.

## Why Is It Important?

Many low-income students receive free or reduced breakfast and/or lunch at their schools. However, on the weekend or on school vacations it can be difficult for families to provide these meals consistently. If students don't have enough to eat when they're out of school, it can affect them in many ways:

- Changes in overall health - can manifest in several ways, including protein and vitamin deficiencies, chronic sickness, headaches, stomach aches and even malnutrition.
- Changes in school performance - students can be distracted by their hunger and have difficulty focusing on lessons or their homework.
- Changes in behavior - hungry kids may be irritable, depressed, anxious, and/or angry, which can cause behavioral changes in the classroom.

## How It Works

Each site receives a delivery of simple-to-prepare, nutritious food from Mid-Ohio Foodbank every other week. This food is used to create 8-10 pound packages, enough to get a child and their family through the weekend. The types of food included are all kid-friendly and easy-to-prepare, in case the child needs to fix it him/herself. Some examples include: cereal, shelf-stable milk, fresh produce and bread, canned fruits and pasta. Sites are selected based on need, proximity to other resources, and site capacity.

## Impact

Mid-Ohio Foodbank's BackPack Program currently serves over 1,000 children at 30 different sites, primarily schools and some after-school programs. These children are generally elementary-school age: 5 to 12 years old. In 2011, more than 208,000 pounds of food were distributed through the program. One in four children in Ohio is food insecure - it's difficult for the next generation to reach their full potential if their basic needs aren't being met. Through our invaluable partnerships with organizations and individuals who are committed to serving the children in their communities, the Foodbank is committed to help in the fight against childhood hunger: One BackPack at a time.

