



## **Fact Sheet**

[CHICAGO] – November 1, 2011

### **The Feeding America Backpack Program**

The mission of the Backpack Program is to meet the needs of children at risk of hunger by providing them with nutritious and easy-to-prepare food to take home on weekends and school vacations when other resources are not available. In addition to providing nutritious food to school children in need, some Backpack programs provide extra food for younger siblings at home. Some programs also operate during the summer months. The Backpack Program is free.

All Feeding America Backpack programs are operated through our member food banks. Each food bank adapts its program to best meet the needs of the community it serves while adhering to best practices and national guidelines.

### **Program Objectives**

- Provide nutritious, healthy, child-friendly food to kids at-risk of hunger
- Distribute food discreetly where children gather, including schools, for them to bring home.

### **National Program Data**

- The Backpack Program is administered in all 50 U.S. states.
- More than 150 Feeding America members and partner distribution organizations operate Backpack programs.
- There are nearly 5,000 Backpack sites such as schools, churches, community centers, libraries and more.
- Collectively, these programs serve more than 230,000 children each year.
- Nationally, the Backpack program distributes more than 30 million meals each year.

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### **History of the Backpack Program**

The Backpack program concept was developed at the Arkansas Rice Depot in Little Rock, Arkansas, after a school nurse began to notice hungry students coming to her with stomach aches and dizziness. The local food bank began to provide the school children with groceries in non-descript backpacks for them to carry home. In 1995, the Backpack program launched as a pilot program, and by 2006 the National Council at Feeding America approved it as an official national program of the network.

Feeding America thanks C&S Wholesale Grocers, a Feeding America Mission Partner, for its support of “Pack ‘til They’re Back” and the Backpack Program.

### **Available Images and Videos**

Images and videos are available online at [FABackPack.org](http://FABackPack.org) or [PackTilTheyreBack.org](http://PackTilTheyreBack.org).

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