

SECOND HARVEST FOOD BANK of Northeast Tennessee



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October 13, 2017

Dr. Nancy Dishner
Executive Vice-President
Niswonger Foundation
P.O. Box 5112
Greeneville, TN 37743

Dear Dr. Dishner,

Nancy

Second Harvest Food Bank of Northeast Tennessee is grateful for Niswonger Foundation's financial support and partnership as we work to reduce childhood hunger through the Food for Kids Backpack Program. Your financial support has enabled us to provide weekend meals to children who have been identified by school personnel in Hancock County as likely to go home to empty cupboards. We are requesting \$18,000 for one year of support to support children who need food for the weekends and holiday breaks when they lack access to school meals. Your support in Hancock County has been critical for participating children who struggle with hunger at home. Of the requested funding, we propose to use \$10,000 to support approximately 100 children in Hancock County while \$8,000 will be used to support 80 children in Hawkins County. Because Hawkins County is mostly rural with high poverty rates, we struggle to get funding dedicated from its residents to help feed hungry children. We hope you will consider expanding your financial support to provide weekend meals to some of the 310 children identified for assistance in Hawkins County.

No child should dread the weekend because she can't eat again until Monday morning.

School personnel in 14 school systems across our 8 county service area identified 4,700 children as being at risk for chronic hunger and food insecurity during the 2017-18 school year. Food insecurity is defined as the lack of consistent access to adequate food caused by a lack of money and other resources at times during the year resulting in periodic or chronic hunger. Families who are food insecure often report that they choose unhealthy foods because they are cheaper. The lack of nutrition from those unhealthy food choices can also negatively impact children's health and development.



FEEDING THE HUNGRY IN NORTHEAST TENNESSEE SINCE 1986
Serving Carter, Greene, Hancock, Hawkins, Johnson, Sullivan, Unicoi, and Washington Counties

Hunger and malnutrition affects the entire community, not just the child. Listed below are some key indicators of how hunger negatively affects children and the community.

- Education: Hunger and inadequate nutrition are linked to delayed brain development and an impaired ability to learn. In addition, hunger and lack of nutrition result in reduced academic achievement; absenteeism is higher, test scores are lower, and there are more grade repeats.¹
- Workforce: An educated, skilled, dependable labor pool is essential for Northeast Tennessee to achieve and maintain a strong economy, but hungry children who perform poorly in school are not likely to grow up and form the core of a productive workforce.
- Economic Development: The percentage of adults receiving food assistance who haven't finished high school is 27.4% in Second Harvest Food Bank's 8 county service area as compared to 14% of all adults nationwide.² This strongly suggests a link between low education and the likelihood of being poor and needing emergency food assistance. Children are the engine for economic growth in the United States. Hunger creates unbearable, unsustainable costs that ripple through the economy and prevent economic success. If we fail to give kids the nutrition and health supports they need, our economy cannot fulfill its potential.
- Health: Undernourished children are more susceptible to illness and require hospitalization more frequently. Hunger and poor nutrition contribute to a number of serious medical conditions such as anemia and asthma. Hungry children also tend to have more issues with oral health.¹
- Mental Health: Hungry, undernourished children exhibit greater levels of anxiety, irritability, depression, hyperactivity, and psychosocial dysfunction and are nearly twice as likely as nourished kids to need mental health counseling. Virtually all behavioral and emotional problems are more prevalent in hungry children. Hungry kids have higher rates of aggression and oppositional behavior and are actually 7 to 12 times more likely to exhibit conduct disorder.¹

¹ *Impact of Hunger Report. Feeding America. 2016* <http://www.feedingamerica.org/hunger-in-america/impact-of-hunger/child-hunger/child-development.html>

² *Hunger in America- 2014* <http://help.feedingamerica.org/HungerInAmerica/hunger-in-america-2014-full-report.pdf>.

The mission of the Food for Kids Backpack Program is to help solve childhood hunger by providing nutritious and easy-to-prepare food for children to take home on weekends and school breaks when other resources are not available. The Food for Kids Backpack program was designed to reach economically disadvantaged children who are at the highest risk of chronic hunger and have limited access to food. These are children who depend on the federal free and reduced (FFR) meal programs for regular meals and without the weekend access are very likely to be hungry. Children as young as five in kindergarten up to 18 year-old seniors in high school receive these bags of supplemental food. Hunger does not discriminate based on age.

Each fall, Second Harvest Food Bank works with each school system's designated personnel to identify the children who are most at risk for hunger and are not getting enough food at home. Second Harvest Food Bank depends on school personnel to enroll children into the Food for Kids Backpack Program. One school administrator wrote that there "...was a child that never brought a snack to school. The child wasn't eating at home because [the family] didn't have enough food. He actually told his teacher

that sometimes [the family] went to Grandma's and if she had extra food then [the family] could eat dinner that night. We sent food home with the child and he was able to eat that night." Another teacher stated, "[k]nowing that students have some food at home to supplement anything else they may have gives the students some peace knowing that food is coming on a regular basis. This reduces stress for the students in ways not even measurable." Children who are chronically hungry come to class hungry and are less able to focus on learning, complain of hunger, or may hoard food. One such example was when a kindergarten teacher found numerous milk and juice cartons and small cereal boxes in one of her students' backpacks. When she asked him about the items, he told her that he picks up the things that other kids were not going to use and takes them home with him so he will have something to eat and drink at home.

The partnership we have with school system personnel is crucial to the effectiveness of the program and ensuring that the most vulnerable children are supplied with the food they need for weekends and holiday breaks. Second Harvest Food Bank monitors all distribution sites and schools to ensure they follow all required guidelines for safe food handling, distribution, and program administration.

Designed to assist the most economically disadvantaged children with chronic hunger and food insecurity, the Food for Kids Backpack plans to serve 4,700 children in 14 school districts throughout our 8 county service area during the 2017-18 school year. In Hancock County, 798 (75.4%) of the 1,058 enrolled children are FFR eligible and in Hawkins County, 4,615 (68.5%) of the 6,741 children are eligible. During the 2017-18 school year, Second Harvest Food Bank will provide Food for Kids Backpacks to 110 FFR eligible children in Hancock County and 310 FFR eligible children in Hawkins County. Second Harvest Food Bank will utilize \$18,000.00 from the Niswonger Foundation to provide food for approximately 180 children (100 in Hancock and 80 in Hawkins) for the school year. The funding provided by the Niswonger Foundation is crucial to provide hungry children in our community with healthy meals and snacks for the weekends and school breaks. The Food for Kids Backpack Program Coordinator has developed a very cost effective program; the bulk of the expense is comprised of purchasing healthy food and distributing the backpacks to area schools. There is no cost to the participating child or the school system.

We are grateful for the financial support and partnership that the Niswonger Foundation has provided to Second Harvest in our efforts to feed hungry children. These funds will have a substantial impact in the lives of these children who suffer from chronic hunger. Thank you for your consideration of our request. If you have any questions about the program or this request, please contact me by phone at 423-279-0430 or by email at executivedirector@netfoodbank.org.

Sincerely yours,



Rhonda Chafin
Executive Director