



Since 2014

2022 Impact Report

We end weekend
hunger for kids.



A Year of Growth

Most of us can't wait for the weekend! But for kids in 1-in-4 Seattle families, weekends are **not** something to look forward to. The free breakfast and lunch these kids get at school are sometimes their only real meals. After lunch on Friday, they go hungry until Monday. It's hard to grasp the reality of spending weekends hungry. Headaches. No energy. Anxiety. This is weekend hunger!

Backpack Brigade partners with local communities to provide weekend hunger bags to school kids in need. We work to ensure every child is fed all weekend long. With a bag that has three breakfasts, three lunches, three dinners and three snacks.

Last year, under real stress from the pandemic, our organization managed to take its biggest leap since starting in 2014 with only one school and eight bags. Together, with our community partners, volunteers, advocates, and schools, we are enormously proud of our accomplishments in 2022. Thank you all!

Since September 2021, we've massively extended our reach from 1,500 bags per week to 3,500! In May, we added five new menus to represent the dietary, cultural and religious needs of our students: Hispanic/Latinx, Asian-American, Kosher/Halal, Vegan, and Gluten Free, filled with specific foods to reflect what a student eats by choice.

With this growth, we've added A LOT more volunteers! We now have over 150 per week! We added more volunteer shifts and now prep and pack four days a week. We also have group opportunities three times per week, so local companies can come volunteer their time, learn about weekend hunger and become advocates supporting our mission.

Our team has grown too! From just one full-time staff to two full-time and two part-time, rounding out our team in the best way.

But it's our volunteers that are the heart of our program, they donated 3,780 hard-working hours, moved 854,685 meals in 94,965 bags of food. Our drivers delivered those bags proudly to Seattle, Bellevue, Highline and Renton School Districts all around King County. We couldn't do this without them. But this is just the tip of the iceberg of the work that needs to be done.

This year is going to harder than years past. With inflation, we are seeing higher food costs, supply chains issues, and gas prices, all causing challenges for us, and for the families of King County. For the first time since our beginning, we are in a place where we have to say NO. No to children, no to schools and districts asking for our support, a place we don't want to be. We've had to start a waitlist for those who want our program, as we can't afford to expand to meet their requests yet. Until then, they go without.

We have the infrastructure, the amazing volunteers, the distributors, and the passion to continue to meet the needs of the students we serve. All that's missing is funding to reach every student, every week, to END weekend hunger for all children, one empty belly at a time. From the bottom of our hearts, thank you for the support as we change and grow to meet the demands of 2023.

Nichelle Hilton *Sara Call*

Nichelle Hilton
Executive Director

Sara Call
Board President



Humble Beginnings: From 1 to 84

“At Backpack Brigade, we don’t have the heart to say ‘no’. The only limiting factor for our ability to feed hungry children...is funding and resources. We’ve got the people and we’ve got the capabilities.”

Bryce Hanson, Backpack Brigade Board Member and Volunteer



Original volunteers in 2015 at Backpack Brigade’s first location.

Giving students a full weekend since 2014

In the Fall of 2013, Nichelle Hilton, Backpack Brigade’s founder, was running a food bank, and viewed a documentary about families not having food for the weekend. One of the children in the documentary stated that it was hard to focus in class when you picture your teacher as a banana. From that moment, she knew she needed to address this issue! Nichelle gathered several volunteers and went to the closest school and asked if this was indeed a problem there. The answer they received from the family support worker was a resounding YES! Recognizing the serious need, they went back to the food bank and immediately filled backpacks with food for eight kids in the school they visited and Backpack Brigade was born!

We grew so fast we couldn’t sustain our work from just food bank donations, so in 2015 we became our own 501(c)(3), now able to receive our own donations we expanded the program and soon moved to our own space. From working outside in warm, wet, or snow-covered tables, to our own warehouse has been a wonderful journey. We are now one of the largest agencies in Washington whose sole purpose is to do this work.

Studies show that school children identified as homeless through the McKinney Vento Act (which defines as inadequate nighttime residence) and food insecure, are often only eating at school, with the Free and Reduced Lunch programs. These children potentially go without food from, Friday lunch to Monday breakfast. This population is also often left without an adult and can only access the food they have on hand, often fending for themselves with nothing in the house. Our bags contain three breakfasts, three lunches, three dinners, and three snacks so the child can feed themselves all weekend long.

The Impact of Weekend Hunger

Washington State is made up of 306 school districts, with enrollment of over 1 million students. Of those, 46% qualify for free and reduced lunch and about 30,000 of them are experiencing homelessness. With an additional 13,000 unaccompanied minors. These students' last secure meal is Friday lunch and the stretch to Monday breakfast at school is a very long time for small stomachs.

One fraction of food insecurity is the issue of weekend hunger, which impacts students' ability to support their academic and mental health needs. Children who regularly experience hunger also experience poorer overall health, higher levels of aggression, anxiety and hyperactivity, impaired cognitive thinking and diminished capacity to learn. This often results in lower test scores, poorer academic achievement, increased school absence, tardiness, and suspensions. Programs that ensure students have nutritious meals to cover that weekend has shown positive impacts on students' academic performance with improved test results in both reading and math. These programs have also helped to increase attendance in school and engagement in the classroom.



Our programs have demonstrated proven benefits and continues to highlight the need to close the weekend food gap. It is also vital that access to nutritious food is a key component to supporting these students. Christina Wong, Director of Policy and Advocacy at Northwest Harvest, and a supporter of Backpack Brigade, states "a key to a child's outcome in life is consistent nutrition. With consistent access to nutrition, we see improvements in physical health, test scores, and decreased behavioral problems." Food insecurity is a pervasive problem, Backpack Brigade serves a continued and unfortunately increasing need toward reducing weekend hunger in the greater Seattle area.

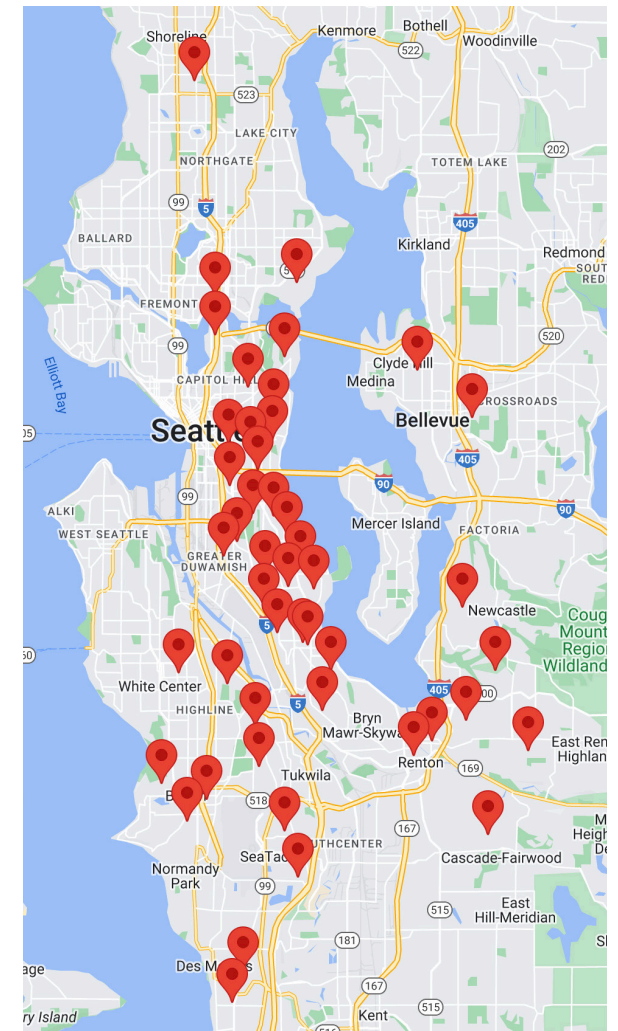
Our story is just beginning – the long road to ending weekend hunger

While hunger and homelessness remain complicated problems, solving the problem of making sure school children have enough to eat every weekend is straightforward.

Every week, Backpack Brigade's 150+ volunteers pack over 3,400 bags of nutritious, easy-to-eat food and deliver them to 84 K-12 schools in four school districts in King County where they are distributed to students in need.

Powered by volunteers and strengthened through donations, sponsors, and corporate partners, Backpack Brigade will END weekend hunger for kids in Washington.

Proudly delivering weekend hunger relief to 84 K-12 schools in Seattle, Bellevue, Highline and Renton school districts



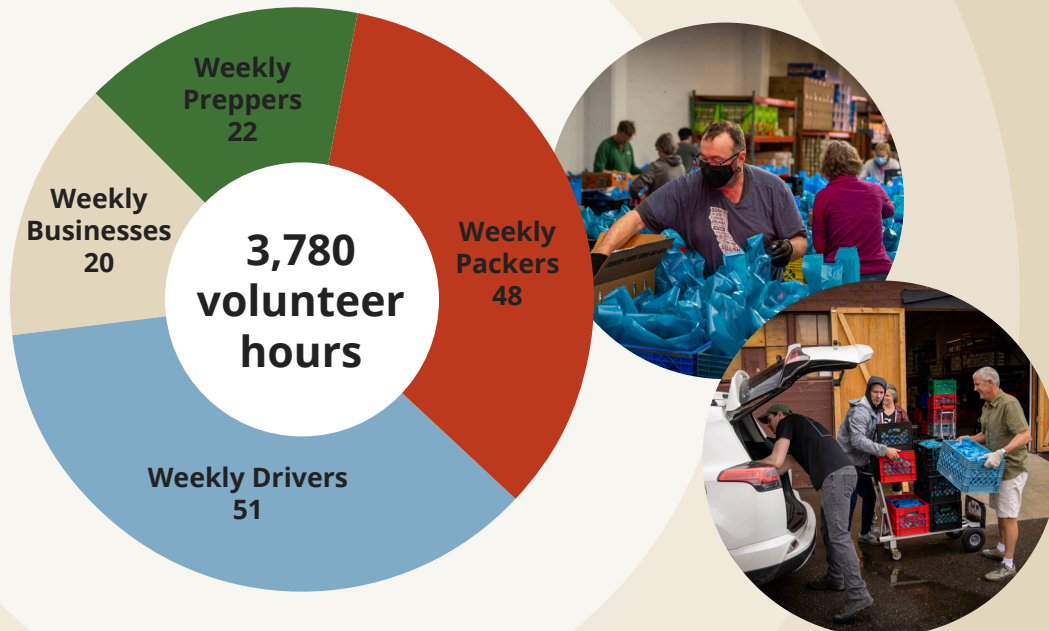
2022 Community Impact

854,685 meals

94,965 bags

3,400+ students

84 schools



Introducing ABC Bags

To meet student's cultural, dietary and religious needs from A to Z, we put together five new, nutritiously-balanced menus.

Students can now receive a bag with kid-friendly food from one of the following menus:



"I have a lot of families who these meal bags are a huge support for them. It's something they very much rely on each week...It's a huge piece of our community now."

Helen Brown, school counselor at White Center Heights Elementary

2022 Operations & Impact Highlights



Backpack Brigade at the Seattle Marathon



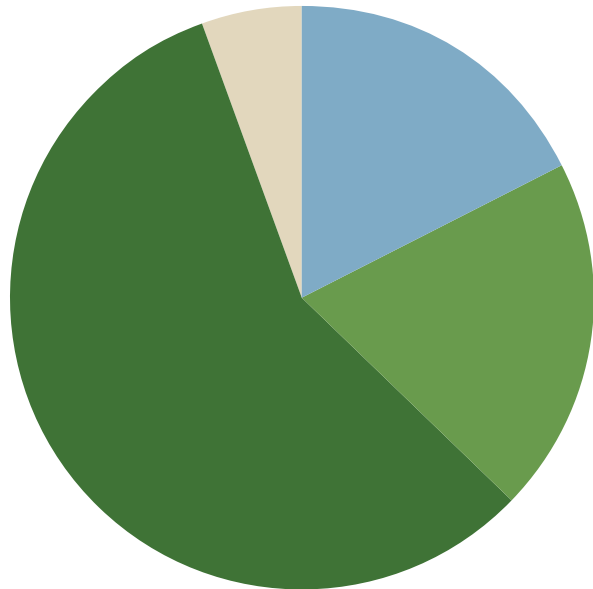
Annual winter fundraising gala



2022 Financial Summary

Income

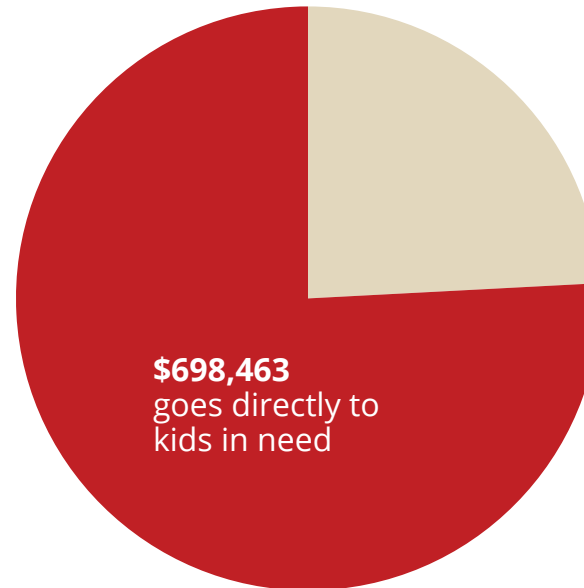
\$919,634



- Grants & City Contracts 57%
- Individual Contributions 20%
- Corporate Partnerships & Matching 18%
- Events 5%

Expenses

\$919,314



- Food 76%
- Operations 24%

“King County has been particularly challenging because there are greater discrepancies in wealth. ...We are faced with two challenges: one, a greater need, and the other, the cost of meeting that need.”

Christina Wong, Director of Policy & Advocacy for Northwest Harvest

Support & Engagement

Backpack Brigade is fortunate to have the support and engagement of the following companies in our community, many of which are employers of our volunteers.

Key Partners



Backpack Brigade is supported by:



United Way of King County



Backpack Meals for Kids



Peach Foundation

Monthly Donors

- | | |
|-----------------------|-------------------|
| Robert Meinig | Dianna Gonzalez |
| Nicole Snowwhite | Ella Kehoe |
| Erin Friedman | Karen Gustafson |
| Siobhan O'Reilly-Shah | Rachel Emery |
| Kelli Dickie | Cynthia Glover |
| Sally Raymond | Allison Crowley |
| Melissa Moran-Hodge | Katy Lowry |
| Sarah Herzog | Angela Gerrald |
| Robyn Stewart | Ashley Shoemaker |
| Christine Eaton | Kim Nicholas |
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| Alicia Arnold | Emily Wignall |
| Georgianna Jurich | Susan Parker |
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Nichelle Hilton, Executive Director

Kyle Arnold, Program and Operations Manager

Jade Loney, Warehouse Associate

We appreciate our board members and wonderful volunteers who make our mission possible!



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