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
Executive Director 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

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.
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.
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:

- Asian American
- Hispanic - Latino
- Kosher - Halal
- Gluten Free
- Vegan
- Standard

“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

Annual winter fundraising gala

Backpack Brigade at the Seattle Marathon
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%

$698,463 goes directly to kids in need

“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

- HomeStreet Bank
- City of Seattle
- Amazon
- United Way of King County
- Schultz Family Foundation
- Emerald City Rotary
- Backpack Meals for Kids

Monthly Donors

Robert Meinig
Nicole Snowhite
Erin Friedman
Siobhan O’Reilly-Shah
Kelli Dickie
Sally Raymond
Melissa Moran-Hodge
Sarah Herzog
Robyn Stewart
Christine Eaton
Chris Van Waters
Alicia Arnold
Georgianna Jurich
Kristin Weiss
Kristina Falcone
Katie Wenger
Jessica Kehoe
Kristi Mandt
Jake Koenigsberg
Dianne Glover
Rachel Zolotarsky
Dave Brewer
Abbee Hilton
Peter Van Wesep
Tim Vandermy
Melissa Clark

Dianna Gonzalez
Ella Kehoe
Karen Gustafson
Rachel Emery
Cynthia Glover
Allison Crowley
Katy Lowry
Angela Gerrald
Ashley Shoemaker
Kim Nicholas
Christopher Bower
Emily Wignall
Susan Parker
Davis Shipman
Roger Capestany
Sara Call
Sara DeBell
Tali Rausch
Lauren Schiltz
Pam Kummert
Julie Kirshtein
Kate Mahaffey
Erin Garcia
Stacey Thompson
Susan Olson
Board Members
Nichelle Hilton, Executive Director
Sara Call, President
Aga Scheurich, Vice President
Mary Ellen Osthus, Secretary
Adi Beegala, Treasurer
Bahareh Samanian, Fundraising
Meghan Barnes, Fundraising
Marcy MacAdam, Nutritionist
Bryce Hanson, Member at Large
Mariela LaPosta, Marketing
Michael Lemieux, Marketing

Staff
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!