



For Immediate Release

Foodbank of Santa Barbara County

Kerry Main Aller-Community Relations Manager
937-3422 x106 kaller@foodbanksbc.org

Foodbank Along with Community Leaders Combat Childhood Hunger with Expansion of The Backpack Program

Santa Barbara, CA —Fighting the growing issues of childhood hunger and food insecurity throughout Santa Barbara County, the Foodbank is expanding *The Backpack Program*. In conjunction with the United Way’s Fun in the Sun (FITS) program, the Foodbank is combating childhood hunger by gathering community leaders, dignitaries and volunteers to assemble 300 backpacks this Thursday, June 28 from 4:00 to 6:00 pm at the Foodbank Warehouse at 4554 Hollister Road.

“For some years now, the Foodbank has partnered with United Way of Santa Barbara County and Fun in the Sun to provide healthy snacks for the disadvantaged children who participate in the program. We are very excited that the Foodbank’s participation in the program is expanding this summer to provide backpacks of nutritious food to the children each weekend,” said United Way Special Projects Director Charles Caldwell. “These children come from challenging situations and we all need to work together if we want to give them a chance at a successful future.”

Santa Barbara Mayor Marty Blum, who will be assembling the backpacks, said “*The Backpack Program* provides a unique service to the children of our community.” *The Backpack Program* is an idea promoted by America’s Second Harvest, the nationwide network of foodbanks, and is being implemented around the country.

The program works by providing a backpack full of child-friendly, easy to prepare and nutritious food items. Children receiving the backpack will be able to provide for themselves 6 well-balanced meals, focusing heavily on whole grains and fruits and vegetables, over the weekend. “Hunger hurts. But what hurts even more is for parents to wonder how they will feed their children... The “working poor” have to make tough choices about where their money goes, and sadly, food is often the last thing these families can afford,” says Jim Mangis, the Foodbank’s executive director.

“43 percent of the food we distribute goes directly to children, *The Backpack Program* is in keeping with our existing efforts to serve hungry children,” said Mangis.

The Backpack Program is part of the Foodbank’s Children’s Hunger Initiative, making a long-term commitment to eradicate childhood hunger in Santa Barbara County. The program is designed to alleviate hunger by addressing the lack of food on weekends and holidays when the traditional school lunch or after-school programs are not available.

The community has already rallied to support this effort, although more support is needed to sustain the program. Fundraising continues for The Children's Hunger Initiative. For a donation of \$300 the Foodbank can feed one child for one-year providing backpacks filled with child-friendly and child specific food: nutritious, easy to open, nothing requiring stove-top cooking, and of course fresh fruits and vegetables.

Empty backpacks are returned by students and refilled for the next week. Each backpack weighs seven to ten pounds. Businesses, organizations and individuals are encouraged to contact the Foodbank to make a monetary donation or to be an important part of foodbanking by becoming a volunteer.

The Foodbank provides a vital link between the multi-faceted food industry and people in need of food. By forming partnerships at the national, regional and local level with growers, producers and manufacturers of food, the Foodbank gains access to millions of pounds of valuable foods which would not ordinarily be available to our local residents through any other channel.

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