Different Name. Same Program.

This year, we rebranded Operation BackPack to The BackPack Program to align with the national Feeding America BackPack Program. The new name doesn’t change the mission – we still provide weekend food to 2700 hungry elementary school kids. The BackPack Program only works because of the partnerships between schools, local community and HACAP. It is volunteer driven and privately funded. Without committed volunteers and generous donors we couldn’t provide this service.

Special thanks to:
Red Nose Day & Cargill for their BackPack Program support

Your donation makes an impact

$5 =
1 backpack full of food

$20 =
1 month of backpacks for 1 child

$200 =
1 year of backpacks for 1 child
Helping Those Who Raised Us

Nationally, 1 in 12 seniors do not have access to enough food to eat and after a lifetime of working and raising families, we think that is unacceptable. We are working with our senior hunger programs to help feed our seniors locally and one of our partner agencies, the Marengo Pantry, is innovating the way they provide food to seniors in their community.

Each month volunteers from the Rural Employment Alternatives (REA) in Conroy help the pantry deliver food to nearby senior housing. The volunteers take a list of available food to each senior who fills out an order. The REA volunteers collect the orders and then prepare them back at the pantry before delivering them. This system allows the Marengo Pantry to serve seniors who wouldn’t otherwise be able to access the pantry, and provides REA clients with mental and physical disabilities opportunities for meaningful ways to contribute to their community while building life skills.

After their lunch break our REA volunteers return to the pantry to help those coming into the pantry for more traditional food distribution. The volunteers assist people by carrying bags and boxes to vehicles.

Dan and Carol Patterson with the Marengo Pantry say, “A huge THANK YOU to all of our REA helpers. Working together not only helps others but we also have lots of fun!”

We are grateful to our partner agencies for modeling the kind of creative, context-specific solutions that work for them. When we all work together — partner agencies, volunteers, and donors we can find ways to care for some our most vulnerable citizens.

Scouting for Food

On November 9th, The Boy Scouts of America, Hawkeye Area Council wrapped up their annual Scouting for Food Campaign with an official proclamation by Cedar Rapids mayor, Brad Hart. Collectively, the local scout troops picked up 93,387 pounds of food from Cedar Rapids, Iowa City, and the neighboring communities. Some of the food collected stayed in the local community and the rest was distributed through the HACAP Food Reservoir warehouse.

“Thank you to everyone in our community for doing their part to make this happen,” said Sarah Dawson, Scout Executive for the Council. We want to say thanks to all the Boy Scouts, troop leaders, parents, food donors, and volunteers for making this event a success! We also want to say a special thank you to Collins Aerospace for providing space to collect and sort food donations in Cedar Rapids.
Thanks for a great 2019!

I am excited to share that during our most recent fiscal year we provided over 7.5 million meals to families of all shapes and sizes in east central Iowa who don’t know where their next meal is coming from. This is up from 5.8 million meals the previous year. Without community partners — volunteers, individual donors, retail food donors, corporate sponsors, and manufacturer donors — our work would be impossible. Here are some additional highlights from last year:

- Enrolled 30 new partner agencies and 11 new school pantries. These agencies represent all seven counties in our services area and are part of the larger network of over 150 partners providing food for needy families in our community.

- The concept of pop-up pantries started in the midst of one of the coldest winters in recent history. Many communities are creating their own versions and partnering with the HACAP Food Reservoir to provide greater food options.

- Implemented a barcode inventory control system that allows the Food Reservoir to more efficiently track inventory in our warehouse.

- Just prior to Thanksgiving, the HACAP Food Reservoir partnered with KCRG and iHeart Media to present a day long telethon to raise awareness and funding for the Food Reservoir and Thanksgiving meal boxes for families in their viewing and listening areas respectively.

- With regular TEFAP (The Emergency Food Assistance Program) and trade mitigation product from the USDA (United States Department of Agriculture) the Food Reservoir distributed more than twice as much product as the previous year.

We accomplished a lot last year, but we still have big goals to work towards in 2020. Looking ahead we are excited about the growth we anticipate for this year because we want to help provide people with healthier food when it’s need.

Our first goal in 2020 is to expand our delivery capabilities through the purchase of a new larger capacity straight truck. We want to get more food to more people and one of the best ways to accomplish that is by bringing the food to them. We know that it can be challenging for our pantries in outlying counties to get to the warehouse for food so we plan to establish a regular delivery route to our rural counties. As the newest member to our small fleet, this truck will increase our delivery capacity by 200% annually. Currently, we can deliver 1.3 million meals annually with our largest truck. This new truck with a higher weight limit will allow us to deliver 3.9 million meals with the same number of trips.

Our biggest goal for the coming year relates to increasing access to food for those who need it. We are tackling this goal in a couple of ways. First, by working to expand our school and mobile pantry programs. Second, by helping empower our partner agencies to increase their capacity to distribute food by adding to their open hours, increasing the amount of food each person served received, and allowing more visits per month.

None of our success from the last year would have happened without the support of our volunteers, fund donors, and food donors. We want to invite you to continue to partner with us in 2020 as we work to fight hunger in our communities. Every dollar we receive can purchase 5 meals for a person in need. Every gift, big and small, makes a difference in our community. Thank you for your continued support.

Sincerely,

Kim Guardado
HACAP Food Reservoir Director
Volunteer Spotlight: Kiwanis

The BackPack Program distributes over 2,200 food bags to K-6 students each week of the school year who don’t have enough to eat. With this volume of bags going out the door every day, we can always use help making sure all of those bags are packed and ready to go for those students who need them. We rely on volunteer groups like the Cedar Rapids Kiwanis along with the Key Clubs they sponsor at both Prairie and Xavier to help ensure we always have plenty of BackPacks on hand. Since September 2018, the Kiwanis and Key Club members have been volunteering monthly while school is in session to pack BackPacks. Laurie Wordon, a Kiwanis member says, “Our club met for a lunch meeting at the HACAP facility to learn about efforts to mitigate hunger in our region. We learned about the Backpack program and knew this would be a great fit for our mission.”

It is also a great chance for the Kiwanis and the students they support to get to know each other while doing plenty of good for their community. Emma Speer, a Prairie Key Club Member says her favorite thing about volunteering at HACAP is, “Knowing I can make such a big difference in a child’s life by doing something so simple and enjoyable. It’s also a lot of fun to do the assembly line with my friends.” Between the 20-30 volunteers that typically attend, this group usually packs 800-1300 bags in the hour that they are here! This just goes to show how big of an impact you can make in a very short amount of time. “It’s honestly heartbreaking to know that there is such a need for the Backpack Program in our area,” Emma says. “Before volunteering at HACAP, I didn’t realize how many kids would go hungry without this program.” Laurie adds, “We can all do small things to chip away at the hunger crisis we have in our region. There is no reason a child should go hungry in the nation’s breadbasket. As Kiwanians, we care deeply and act with intent when it comes to helping children in our region. The HACAP Backpack Program is one effort we support with our club pocketbook as well as our hearts and hands.”

We give our sincere thanks to the Kiwanis and members of the Prairie and Xavier Key Clubs who so generously donate their time and other resources to make sure no child needs to go to bed hungry!

If you are part of a group that would like to help support the work of the BackPack Program please reach out to Hailey Carr at hcarr@hacap.org to set up a group volunteer experience. We also love welcoming volunteers on an individual basis who work on various projects that match their interests and skills. We have volunteers who help with everything from data entry and scanning to picking orders in the warehouse and helping with the milk delivery route. If you want to make sure fewer people in our community go to bed hungry we can find a way for you to help!

Eastern Iowa Freedom from Hunger Fund and Food Drive

Traditionally, food assistance programs see an even bigger demand for assistance during the summer months when children are out of school and the number of homeless persons seeking assistance increases. Our annual Eastern Iowa Freedom from Hunger Fund and Food Drive addresses this need for a greater supply of food assistance during the summer months when donations dwindle but demand increases. Running from June 1st to September 30th we had many companies, community groups, produce growers, and individuals contribute to making this drive successful. We want to thank everyone who participated in this year’s drive, and to highlight our top donors:

- **Collins Aerospace**: 35,069 meals
- **Mercy Medical Center**: 9,192 meals
- **TCS**: 31,398 meals
- **Farmer’s State Bank**: 11,887 meals
- **ImOn**: 20,590 meals
- **Linn County**: 10,199 meals
- **City of Cedar Rapids**: 6,000 meals
- **Dave Wright**: 1,333 meals
- **Collins Aerospace**
- **Mercy Medical Center**

Corporate Champion Community Champion