

School Backpacks To Be Full Again with the “Kidz Fuel - Snack Pack” Program

SAN BERNARDINO, CA (JUNE 15, 2010) - Healthy food is on the way to needy kids through the “**Kidz Fuel - Snack Pack**” program. The original idea for this program came from a group of students at Loma Linda Academy High School who went to the San Bernardino City Council with a request to help hungry kids after they had heard about a similar program in San Diego. From there, Helping Hands and Project Life Impact provided volunteers and Community Action Partnership of San Bernardino County (CAPSBC) secured funding resources from the California Community Services Department, the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act to launch the program in April 2010.

Currently, the program is serving 356 low-income students in 13 school sites within the San Bernardino City Unified School District. The project was slated to end in September 2010, however, additional funding resources have been obtained by Community Action Partnership of San Bernardino County through a Community Services Block Grant under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, and from an additional donation from Wells Fargo. As a result, this fall the program will re-launch, and school sites will be able to assist 425 students to participate in this once a week program for a total 25 weeks.

Statistics from San Bernardino City Unified School District’s 2009-10 academic calendar show that of the 53,304 students enrolled in school, 50,235 are receiving free & reduced priced meals. This translates into 94% of students needing some sort of food assistance, a very compelling sign of the dire need for programs such as this one.



High School student volunteers assist assembling food for backpacks at the Helping Hands warehouse.

The “Kidz Fuel - Snack Pack” program is designed to provide nutritionally balanced food during the weekend for eligible students. Each Friday, an ordinary backpack will be stuffed with enough ready-to-each snacks for 2 breakfasts and 2 lunches, plus educational materials to help the household identify and apply for all the social services for which they are eligible. The backpack is then returned the next week to be restocked. The food items provided will be nonperishable, easy-to-prepare items such as cereal, peanut butter, bread, tortillas, crackers, nuts, spaghetti-Os, granola bars, Easy Mac and Cheese, fruit cups, juice, shelf stable milk, and water.

To maintain student confidentiality, the backpacks have no symbols or identification marks to signify participation in the program. Also the kids get to keep the backpacks when the program ends. The program is trying to help with student's nutritional needs and their overall mental well-being. Other similar programs have been shown to help students have a better chance at academic success.

This program is a collaborative effort of San Bernardino City Unified School District's Family Resource Center, the City of San Bernardino Mayor's Office - Healthy San Bernardino Initiative, the San Bernardino County Superintendent of Schools Offices, Project Life Impact, Helping Hands, Arrowhead United Way, and Community Action Partnership of San Bernardino County's Food Bank.

Ms. Patricia L. Nickols, Chief Executive Officer for Community Action Partnership of San Bernardino County aid, "In these difficult economic times, programs like "Kidz Fuel - Snack Pack" are extremely beneficial. The need for food assistance has been so great and we are excited to have the opportunity to extend this special program to kids in our community."

Participating schools in San Bernardino City Unified School District include Emmerton Elementary, San Bernardino High School, Rio Vista Elementary School, Davidson Elementary School, Arroyo Valley High School, Hunt Elementary School, Anton Elementary School, Lankershim Elementary School, E. Neal Roberts Elementary School, Highland Pacific Elementary School, and San Bernardino City Unified School District's Family Resource Center. Participating Schools within Colton Joint Unified School District are Werner Elementary School, Kelley Elementary School, Morgan Elementary School, and Frisbee Middle School.

Anyone interested in volunteering to help assemble and deliver backpacks should contact either Helping Hands at (951) 544-8672 or Project Life Impact at (909) 388-1700. High School students are encouraged to volunteer.

There is also a need for backpack donations, plus any businesses or individuals interested in supporting this program can call (909) 723-1583.

CAPSBC is the designated Community Action Agency for San Bernardino County charged with providing programs and services for low-income individuals and families to help lift them out of poverty. As one of the largest non-profit human services agency in San Bernardino County, CAPSBC, provides resources and opportunities to the low-income to improve their lives, contribute to their communities and offer a return on investment for our communities, cities and county. Programs include Weatherization, Home Energy Assistance, Family Development, Assets for Independence/Individual Development Accounts, Volunteer Income Tax Assistance, Homeless Management Information Systems and the CAPSBC Food Bank. For more information about Community Action Partnership and it's programs call (909) 723-1514 or visit us on the web at www.capsbc.org