

a Proud Salute to our community Guardians

Yankton Sack Pack Program

School has started and many people have looked forward to another new school year. Our thoughts turn toward new school supplies, new school clothes and all the excitement that goes along with starting something new. Unfortunately there are those in our community who will not have that same excitement. They will struggle with having enough to purchase the needed supplies and clothing for their children. This includes food as well. Our schools seek to help by providing students with free and reduced lunches. This program provides healthy well balanced meals for children on weekdays throughout the school year. But what happens to them on the weekends when the children are not in school and there is nothing at home for them to eat? The Yankton Sack Pack program seeks to address this need by providing students with nutritional, child-friendly food to take home for the weekend. The food chosen is shelf-stable, kid friendly and easily managed by the children. The food is usually packed on Wednesdays by volunteers and distributed to the schools on Fridays. All food is given to the children confidentially.

Some commonly asked questions about the Sack Pack Program are:

Is there a need for the Sack Pack Program in Yankton?

The answer is yes! There is a tremendous need. Yankton School District's rate for free and reduced lunches is at 44%. This equates to 1 in 4 children that are living below the poverty line. However, qualifying for free and reduced meals is not a requirement for the program. Our program refers to percentages only because they tend to be in line with the number of students we provide packs to. This also allows us to formulate a budget each year so we know how many children we will be able to provide meals to.

What does this program mean to the children who receive them?

These packs mean the difference between going hungry and having good nutrition over the weekend. Many educators will tell you that good nutrition is vital to children's ability to learn. Children who return to school on Mondays that have had adequate food over the weekend are more alert and ready to learn when they return from the weekend. One principal reported that a student did not feel well one Friday but came to school anyway because they knew if they didn't come to school, they would not be able to pick up their Sack Pack. Hence this student would have gone without food for the weekend. This shows how important this food is to the children that receive them.

Is there a cost to the school or families?

No. The Sack Pack Program is free to the school and families of children in need.

Who is eligible for the program?

All students are eligible for the Sack Pack Program who feel they have a need. As a program, we do not want to put restrictions on who can qualify, such as, qualifying for free and reduced lunches. The SD School Lunch Program income guideline states that if a family earns even \$1.00 over the income guideline, they don't qualify. In many cases, these are the families that need the program the most.

Who pays for the food?

The Sack Pack Program buys all the food that goes into the packs. Funds for the Sack Pack are provided ONLY by community support as well as a grant from our local United Way. The Sack Pack Program also holds food drives a couple times a year. Last year we received over 1000 pounds of food through our food drive events at Hy-Vee. We will be holding another food drive this fall

so please watch for us at the entrances of Hy-Vee! We also hold peanut butter drives through the school year. This allows us to put jars of peanut butter in packs over long breaks such as, Christmas and Easter. We try to include larger amount of food in packs over these long breaks. Kids against Hunger also donates food packs to the program a couple times a year. These food packs help to feed an entire family. All of these donations are made by the generous people of our community.

What schools are participating?

We are currently providing meals at Webster, Lincoln, Beadle, Stewart and Sacred Heart Elementary Schools. We have added the Yankton Middle School this fall. This has been a request for several years and our program is so happy that we have the budget this year to make this happen.

How many children are participating?

With the addition of the Yankton Middle School, we are anticipating on providing over 350 weekly packs to students this school year.

What is the cost to provide meals to a child each week?

Each weekly pack has an average cost of \$3.75. It cost roughly \$150.00 to sponsor one child for a school year. This amounts to \$1,312.50 per week to provide packs to 350 students. (\$5,250 per month)

What is included in each pack?

A typical pack has 2 juice boxes, 2 breakfast items, 2 entree items, 2 snacks, can of vegetables and a fresh fruit. For example, a weekly pack would contain: 2 juice boxes, single serving size of cereal, pack of oatmeal, single serving of mac & cheese, can of ravioli, can of vegetables, granola bar, box of raisins and a piece of fresh fruit. We have a rotating

menu so there is a variety of different foods each week.

How can people get involved?

One of the best ways individuals, civic groups, churches, foundations, and businesses can help, is to consider helping to sponsor a child or to sign up to volunteer to help pack meals. We live in an amazing community and we have been blessed with awesome donors and volunteers that help make this program the success that it is. If you would like to make a donation to the Sack Pack Program you can mail your donation to: Sack Pack Program; P.O. Box 7038; Yankton, SD 57078 or by calling 661-7993. We would very much like to visit with you or your organization and share all of the various ways people can join our effort. This can be arranged by calling 661-7993.



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