

# The Feeding Frontline



Fall 2024  
lincolnfoodbank.org



In its **20-year history**, nearly **45,000 students\*** have participated in the Backpack Program.

\*includes duplicates

2004

● **50 Students**  
Served by Child Hunger Programs

2024

● **6,600 Students**  
Served by Child Hunger Programs

*Sample*

## BackPack Menu

1 box



GRANOLA BARS

2 cans of tuna



1 can tomato soup



1 pasta entrée



PASTA

4 pieces of fresh fruit



1 voucher on the last Friday of each month



## Filling BackPacks for 20 Years

When Lincolmites Diana Pasco and Nancy Ganser learned about a program in St. Joseph, Missouri that sent food-filled BackPacks home with kids on the weekend, both had a similar thought: Can we do that here?

Children need nutritious food to thrive every day of the week. For students who rely on school-provided breakfast and lunch, the weekend can create hungry stomachs. A program like this could help bridge that gap and ensure kids have access to nourishment when school is out.

The two discussed the idea with then Food Bank of Lincoln Executive Director Scott Young. With a shared determination, commitment to feeding kids and a community network of support, this concept became a reality. In September 2004, the Backpack Program launched, providing 50 students at Clinton Elementary School in Lincoln with food for the weekends.

As we celebrate two decades of the Backpack Program, we're grateful to friends, like you, who have helped our Child Hunger initiatives grow. Today, four programs provide fuel for learning – Backpack Program, School Food Markets and Pantries, Student-Parent Voucher Program and Lincoln Public Schools (LPS) Emergency Pantry. Combined, these efforts will serve about 6,600 students and families at more than 110 schools across Southeast Nebraska each month this academic year.

To learn more about Child Hunger Programs and how you can support these hunger-alleviating efforts, visit [lincolnfoodbank.org](http://lincolnfoodbank.org).

For more anniversary coverage throughout the year, follow us on social media and at [lincolnfoodbank.org](http://lincolnfoodbank.org).

It costs about **\$275** to provide one child with a **food-filled Backpack** for an **entire school year**.

Thanks for helping connect kids with more than



**1.5 million**  
**BackPacks**  
since 2004!

## Mission

To alleviate hunger in Southeast Nebraska.

## Vision

Nourishing our communities to end hunger.

## Values

Collaboration, Compassion, Diversity, Education, Responsibility

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## Did you know?

The average cost **per meal** in Southeast Nebraska is **\$3.96**, up **31%** from 2019.

\*Data from Feeding America's Map the Meal Gap 2024 report.

# A Letter from The President & CEO



When the Backpack program launched 20 years ago, it was sparked by educators in the public school system who critically examined the need to serve children beyond Friday's school bell. They understood the impact not having enough to eat has on *every* student in the classroom.

Closer examination revealed the root cause. It wasn't simply that children were misbehaving or couldn't understand lessons. As a side effect of hunger, they lacked the ability to focus.

That willingness to ask difficult questions has had an undeniable, positive impact on the lives of tens of thousands of children. In the spirit of a new school year, consider this formula: Critical Review + Genuine Commitment = Positive Impact.

In July, Food Bank Chief Relationship Officer John Mabry and I attended an intercity visit in Boise, Idaho. It brought together representatives from the public, private and nonprofit sectors. In a session focused on philanthropy, we listened as a leader of a major Idaho-based charitable foundation critiqued how food banks report success. Often, it's in the number of pounds distributed or meals connected. He asserted the idea isn't to keep pushing out pounds adding, "Food banks should be hell-bent on working themselves out of a job."

### We wholeheartedly agree.

Like other Feeding America-member food banks, we're focusing less on the total meals connected and emphasizing the variety of foods and root causes. The "root" is exactly why John and I participated in this visit. **When powerful leaders have conversations to examine community improvement, it is our responsibility to participate. As allies of under-resourced neighbors, this Food Bank has a responsibility to speak up. I thanked him for his bold statement, adding food banks cannot do this work alone.**

In multiple sessions, comments about Boise's cleanliness were made. I asked if the employees who keep this polish on the city are paid living wages—wages that would help put food on the table. The work they perform is the source of deep pride for their city. Living wages should be the workers' share of that pride.

This is one example of a shared metric we might all emphasize. It would drive down the need and pounds distributed. When it comes to food insecurity measurements, it is the work of businesses to pay living wages. It is the work of the government to end partisan flexing. It is the work of voters to engage in democracy—like those educators who launched the Backpack Program did 20 years ago.

The learning of the school year ahead isn't just for kids. It's a chance for us all to explore how hell-bent we really are on doing good.

With gratitude,

Michaela Kumke  
President & CEO

# BackPack Program: Fueling Futures

As the final school bell of the week rang, Elijah would head to the basement level of Randolph Elementary School. There, he'd be greeted by a row of food-filled BackPacks, nestled between the computer lab and music room. Elijah would grab one and head home, eager to see what was inside.

Most weeks, he'd go straight to his bedroom to explore the contents of this "goody bag," searching for the "prize picks" like granola bars, snack items and his favorite—cereal. Cinnamon Toast Crunch, Cheerios and Froot Loops, to be exact (because you can enjoy them dry).

Items like pasta were less familiar to the 7-year-old, who would give the dry noodles and other remaining foods to his mom. She'd know how to cook them.

And she did.

"She'd end up making spaghetti by the end of the week, but at the time, I wasn't putting two-and-two together that she was using the Backpack noodles for that," Elijah recalls.

This fall, the agriculture and environmental sciences communications major and entrepreneurship minor will begin his final year at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. While finishing his degree, the 21-year-old founder and executive director will also lead the charge at Big Gumdrop Outdoors, one of Lincoln's newest nonprofits dedicated to



educating urban youth about nature and inspiring them to explore the great outdoors.

**"I think having that consistency (of Child Hunger Programs) helped my mom and my family because we knew there was going to be food," he reflects, 14 years later. "It added a layer of security that I was unaware of at the time but ended up affecting me."**

To read an extended version of Elijah's story, visit [lincolnfoodbank.org/about/stories-of-change](http://lincolnfoodbank.org/about/stories-of-change).

## BackPack Program Adds New Schools

In Southeast Nebraska, **1 in 5 children** lives in a food-insecure household. To help alleviate child hunger, our Backpack Program is expanding to three new Lincoln Public Schools locations for the 2024-25 school year. Thanks to the dedicated teams at Kooser, Robinson and Wysong Elementary Schools, **about 75 new kiddos will be connected with food-filled BackPacks each Friday during the upcoming school year.**

**"We want each school (in our service area) to know that food resources are available if they decide the need is there."**

— Kati Umberger, Youth & Senior Programs Manager

## Create a Lasting Legacy

August is National Make-A-Will Month, a time thousands dedicate to creating their wills and planning for the future. It's a mindful step towards ensuring your wishes are carried out and an opportunity to uphold the values important to you.

Thanks to our partnership with FreeWill, you can easily create a legally valid will at no cost—and it only takes about 20 minutes! It also gives you the opportunity to embed your legacy with the Food Bank of Lincoln's mission, helping alleviate hunger in Southeast Nebraska for years to come.

Learn more and get started at [lincolnfoodbank.org/planned-giving](http://lincolnfoodbank.org/planned-giving).

Scan here for more information



For more information about either of these programs, please contact John Mabry at [jmabry@lincolnfoodbank.org](mailto:jmabry@lincolnfoodbank.org) or (402) 819-6861.

# Tackling Hunger:

## A Delicious Partnership

We have some friends at Runza® who know how to fight hunger in more ways than one. Our partners there, in addition to offering delicious meals throughout Nebraska and beyond, have contributed thousands and thousands of dollars to the Food Bank of Lincoln to help feed children and families. And did you know, the Food Bank delivers approximately 100,000 Runza® sandwiches to Memorial Stadium each football season? It's true.



**“Since our locations make Runza® sandwiches fresh every morning, we don’t have a need for refrigerated trucks – except for seven days a year ahead of home football games when we need help with transport to Memorial Stadium,”** said Becky Perrett, Runza® Restaurants director of marketing. “Our unique partnership ensures the Husker faithful have their favorite stadium food available each game. We are very thankful to partner with the Food Bank of Lincoln.”

The feeling is deliciously mutual. Thank you, Runza!

## September is Hunger Action Month!

Everyone needs nutritious food to thrive. Yet, **1 in 7 people** in Southeast Nebraska, including **1 in 5 children**, experience food insecurity. Whether you donate, advocate, volunteer or spread the word – every action counts in the movement to end hunger.

**Save the date for these special Hunger Action Month events, and let’s end hunger together.**

### Hunger Action Day Tuesday, September 10

Wear **orange** to raise awareness about hunger in our community, and share with your friends, co-workers and neighbors why this cause is important to you. Post photos of your orange swag on social media and tag @FoodBankofLincoln in your posts on Facebook and Instagram and @Food-Bank-of-Lincoln on LinkedIn.



### Dine Out to Help Out Wednesday, September 11

Join us on Sept. 11 and enjoy a meal with meaning. On this day, participating food and beverage industry locations will donate a portion of their sales to the Food Bank of Lincoln. This means when you savor a meal (or two!), you’re also helping set the tables for neighbors facing hunger in our community. View the list of participating venues at [lincolnfoodbank.org](http://lincolnfoodbank.org).

### Nebraska State Capitol Light-Up September 13-15

We’re turning the State Capitol orange to help shine a light on food insecurity in Nebraska. Visit Lincoln to see this iconic landmark in a new hue.



This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

#### Address

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402.466.8170

#### Hours

8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.  
Monday-Friday

#### Connect On Social Media

