



About Backpack Buddies



The **Lowcountry Food Bank** first piloted the **BackPack Buddies** program in 2006 to address the specific problem of weekend hunger among disadvantaged, at-risk children in the lowcountry. **BackPack Buddies** is a program model created by **Feeding America**, the nation's food bank network. As a member of Feeding America, the Lowcountry Food Bank procures nutritious, high quality food for the **BackPack Buddies** program and provides weekend backpacks to children at risk for weekend hunger. A typical weekend menu consists of two shelf stable containers of milk, two cereals, two single serving entrees, a granola bar, a fruit cup and juice or raisins. By working closely with our partnering schools, the most chronically food insecure children are identified from among those receiving free or reduced cost school meals. Partnering with civic, business, faith-based and other community organizations large and small, backpacks are packed and delivered to 46 schools in 8 of the 10 counties within our service and distributed to 2,600 enrolled children prior to dismissal each Friday. One child can be sponsored each weekend of the school year for about \$146.00.

In the past four years the **BackPack Buddies** program has expanded eight fold. This tremendous growth has been made possible largely through community investment and the generosity of our valued partners. Twenty-nine of the **BackPack Buddies** schools serving 62% of our total Backpack Buddies clients are located in the greater tri-county Charleston area. During the 2011-2012 school year, 296,000 pounds of food will be distributed through the program.

BackPack Buddies is integral to the Lowcountry Food Bank's *End Childhood Hunger Campaign*, a comprehensive strategic initiative that is the driving force behind our mission to end childhood hunger in coastal South Carolina. Chronic food insecurity presents many adverse consequences for children, including impaired cognitive function, compromised ability to resist illness, and higher levels of aggression, hyperactivity and anxiety. Alleviating hunger concerns through programs such as **BackPack Buddies** is a significant first step to improving outcomes for children most at-risk in our communities. In a survey devised and conducted for the Lowcountry Food Bank by MUSC dietetic interns in May of 2010, ninety two percent of school coordinators reported moderate to significant improvements to overall learning behavior and the general health of participants enrolled in

the **BackPack Buddies** program. Eighty eight percent reported modest to significant improvements to attention span, and reduction of hunger related behaviors, including complaints of stomach aches and rushing the lunch line. 100% of the teachers and school officials that participated in this survey assessed the **BackPack Buddies** program as being moderately to significantly effective in curbing childhood hunger. Community investment and support is vital to sustaining the **BackPack Buddies** program in coastal South Carolina. To find out more about **BackPack Buddies** and how you can make an important difference in the life of a child contact Deb Loesel, Programs Manager dloesel@lcfbank.org.