

**Food 4 Kids Program Overview**

**Background Need:**

United Ways across the country, including several in Minnesota, facilitate Packing for the Weekend programs that provide food for students who may not have enough to eat over the weekends.

United Way of Hastings (UWH) researched the need locally and through discussions with school representatives and social workers determined that some Hastings schoolchildren eligible for free/reduced lunches were coming to school hungry on Monday mornings. Students were feeling ill, having difficulty concentrating, and unable to focus in the classroom.

**Pilot Program:**

In the fall of 2015, UWH conducted a pilot program serving a total of 40 children from October – February (22 weekends). Social workers, and school family support personnel identified and registered the students in the program. Discretion and confidentiality were assured as students received bags of food in their backpacks for themselves and any siblings in the home.

UWH provided initial funding of $2,000 to purchase food and supplies, and cover administrative costs.

During the post-pilot evaluation phase, it was determined there was enough of a need in the school district to officially launch the program (rebranded as Food 4 Kids) for the 2016-17 school year. Food 4 Kid deliveries were made each week to the Hastings Middle School, Kennedy, McAuliffe, and Pinecrest.

The 2017/18 school year began with distribution of 70 weekend meals per week and grew to 136 by the end of the school year.

The 2018/19 school year averaged 140 bags distributed each week and the program expanded to cover Early Childhood Education / Preschool Students. We also continued the program in the summer of 2019 through the SPARK Program.

The 2019-20 school year the program expanded to include the Hastings High School and a total of 4,366 Food 4 Kids weekend meals were distributed through the school year

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