

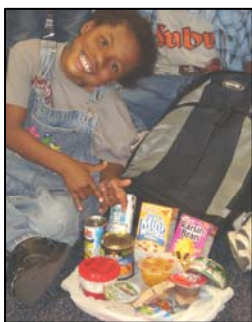


San Diego Food Bank – Press Release

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For immediate release

Summer End to Students' Weekend Food Program



San Diego, Calif. – June 19, 2008 – The San Diego Food Bank (SDFB) sponsored a bike prize drawing* to mark the end of the school year for students participating in a pilot program that provides weekend food packs to students from low-income families.

The prize drawings were held at the program's three pilot schools: Maryland Elementary School and Bobier Elementary School in Vista, and Children's Choice Preschool in El Cajon.

The *Food 4 Kids Backpack Program* provides food to children who receive free school meals Monday through Friday, but who are at severe risk of going hungry during weekends when free school meals are unavailable.

The San Diego Food Bank works in cooperation with schools and teachers and provides students identified as "severe hunger risks" with child-friendly food to get them through the weekend.

Discretion is imperative, and all food is distributed outside of class every Friday afternoon. Children are called away from class and given a pre-packed plastic bag with child-friendly shelf-stable food that is discreetly tucked into their backpacks.

A typical food pack will include items such as: mac & cheese, shelf-stable milk, fruit cups, cereal, ravioli (pop tops), chicken noodle soup, peanut butter and jelly, and pasta twirls.



Bobier Elementary School bike prize winners, Kristi, a first-grader, and third-grader Daniel were “really excited” to win the bicycles.** Neither of the students own a bike, and both said they’d be riding their new bikes “all weekend.” Kristi, who lives with five sisters, two cousins, her mother and grandmother, said that she was “very happy to have food on Saturday and Sunday.”

Daniel lives with five siblings, his grandmother, mother and stepfather. He said that his family doesn’t “always have enough food for everybody.” His favorite foods in the program are “mac & cheese and chocolate milk.”



Susan Thayer, school nurse and F4K coordinator at Bobier Elementary School said, “In many cases these children live at home with siblings and extended family, and often there will only be one breadwinner working two or three low-wage jobs, but they can’t feed a family on a McDonald’s paycheck.

Our teachers will identify children at the beginning of the year as ‘hunger risks’ and give me the names to add to the program. They tend to be latchkey kids and risk going hungry on a regular basis. The *Food for Kids Backpack Program* has made a big difference to the students’ lives. Since the program started, the students have been more attentive in class, and in some cases their behavior has also improved.”

The *Food 4 Kids Backpack Program* is in its second pilot year and serves 75 children at three schools. The average weekly price of the program per child is \$10.70.



Acacia Thede, Maryland Elementary School Principal said, “The *Food 4 Kids Backpack Program* serves 25 of our students, and we are hoping to include more children next year. This is a vital program for students whose parents are struggling to make ends meet, and we are very grateful to the donors and volunteers at the San Diego Food Bank who provide us with pre-packed bags every Friday.”

The SDFB is planning to expand the pilot program in 2009 and is currently appealing for sponsorship from donors. In San Diego County alone 214,479 children qualify for free lunch and breakfast programs. The SDFB argues that most of these children are likely to face weekends with little or no food at home.

J. Scofield “Scody” Hage, Executive Director, San Diego Food Bank said, “This is a problem throughout the country. Kids on free school meals who are most at risk sometimes return to school on Monday’s weighing less than they did the previous Friday. Their pain and inability to focus in school is very clear. Next year, the San Diego Food Bank aims to increase the program by an additional 40 children. We are appealing

to the community to continue giving donations since the more donations we receive, the more kids we can feed over the weekends when school's out." ***

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Notes for Editors:

* Bicycles were donated by sponsors to the San Diego Food Bank.

** Bobier Elementary School students' names were changed to protect identities.

Students at Maryland Elementary signed consent forms to participate in photographs.

*** The San Diego Unified School District in partnership with the City of San Diego Park & Recreation Centers will be providing free lunches for children ages 2 to 18 throughout the summer. There will be no enrollment, no paperwork and no income qualifications for children to receive free lunches. Go to www.sandi.net.

About the Food Bank:

Established in 1977, the San Diego Food Bank is a critical component to the welfare of San Diego County, providing food to people in need, advocating for the hungry and educating the public about hunger-related issues. Through a combination of government programs and partnerships with more than 290 San Diego County non-profit charities, SDFB acts as a central repository and distribution point for government and donated food. Funded by foundations, grants, USDA, corporations, sponsors and individual donors, SDFB distributes more than 10 million pounds of food annually to individuals, families and a network of non-profit organizations that work to alleviate hunger throughout the county. For more information, please visit www.sandiegofoodbank.org

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