



Filling pantries. Filling lives.

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **HOUSTON FOOD BANK ANNOUNCES \$1 MILLION GIFT FROM THE KINDER FOUNDATION TO PROVIDE FOR CHRONICALLY HUNGRY CHILDREN**

*Record gift directed to the Backpack Buddy Program*

HOUSTON – Houston Food Bank is pleased to announce a \$1 million gift from the Kinder Foundation to support the Backpack Buddy program. This is the largest single donation that the program has received to date, and will help provide much-needed food and nutrition to schoolchildren who struggle with having enough food to eat.

Many children who rely on free or reduced-priced lunches during the school year go home to meager or no meals on weekends. The Houston Food Bank's Backpack Buddy program works to fill that gap. On Fridays or on the last day before a holiday weekend, at participating schools and other locations, children take home child-friendly, nonperishable, easily consumed and vitamin-fortified food. The food is given to the children discreetly, to avoid inviting unwanted attention.

The Backpack Buddy program, which launched in August 2006 at three Houston-area elementary schools, now provides close to 30,000 backpacks per month to students at 381 schools. Forty-eight Houston Food Bank member agencies also assist with the distribution of these backpacks, providing healthy food to chronically hungry children who might otherwise go without.

“A gnawing feeling in the stomach, light-headedness, dizziness, headaches, lethargy and weakness, inability to concentrate, pain – all of these are associated with hunger and can effect a child's ability to learn and grow,” says Brian Greene, president/CEO of Houston Food Bank. “Hunger for any individual or group is troubling but childhood hunger is especially distressing. Food is a basic need that we all should be privy to and not have to worry about, especially our youngsters. With the Backpack Buddy Program, we work to remove some of the stress of food from these children's lives, to give them nutrition to help them develop and prosper.”

According to The Annie E. Casey Foundation's Kids County report 2010-2011, 62.4% of Texas children are receiving free/reduced price lunch. In Houston Food Bank service area, this number trends slightly higher at 63%. The total number of children in the service area receiving free/reduced price lunch is 723,032. Last year, Houston Food Bank's Backpack Buddy program served an average of 5,400 children per month at 371 different sites.

With this generous gift from the Kinder Foundation, Houston Food Bank hopes to expand to 1,000 sites reaching 27,000 students by 2017.

“The Houston Food Bank has a track record of working to provide the most basic and significant support for children to develop and lead healthy, productive lives,” said Nancy G. Kinder, president of the Kinder Foundation. “We hope this gift will have a meaningful impact and also inspire others.”

One teacher at Cook Road Head Start has seen firsthand how important the Backpack Buddy program is to her students. Students come to school alert and ready to learn on Monday, instead of groggy and distracted after a weekend without enough food. “You’re not just providing food for students. You’re providing an opportunity for them to have equal access to education,” said Jennie Carr.

Learn more about the Backpack Buddy program and how you can make a donation of food, time or money. Visit [www.houstonfoodbank.org](http://www.houstonfoodbank.org).



#### **About the Kinder Foundation**

The Kinder Foundation is a family foundation established by Rich and Nancy G. Kinder. It is the mission of the Foundation to enrich the lives of people in the Houston area through transformational grants that impact green space, education and quality of life. Visit [kinderfoundation.org](http://kinderfoundation.org).

#### **About the Houston Food Bank**

Now operating from a new, 308,000 square-foot facility, the Houston Food Bank is the nation’s largest size Feeding America food bank and source of food for hunger relief charities in 18 southeast Texas counties. They have been named one of 10 Top-Notch Charities across the nation by Charity Navigator. A network of 500 food pantries, soup kitchens, senior centers and other agencies, feeding a total of 137,000 people each week, provides 50 million nutritious meals annually. Fresh produce, meat and nonperishables are distributed from the new warehouse at 535 Portwall, and hot meals are prepared and distributed from Keegan Center, a 15,000 square-foot industrial kitchen. Additional community services range from nutrition education to assistance with food stamp applications and hands-on job training. Red Barrels offer a convenient way for grocery shoppers to donate nonperishables for their neighbors in need. The Houston Food Bank, founded in 1982, is a certified member of Feeding America, the nation’s food bank network. The organization plans to grow to an annual distribution of 100 million nutritious meals by 2018. Visit [HoustonFoodBank.org](http://HoustonFoodBank.org) for more information. Find us on Facebook at [facebook.com/theHoustonFoodBank](https://facebook.com/theHoustonFoodBank) or follow our news on Twitter at [twitter.com/HoustonFoodBank](https://twitter.com/HoustonFoodBank).