

Food Backpacks

Intro:

Hello my name is Kris Hodge, and I am the Homeless Liaison for the Mt. Vernon-Enola School District. I have been the Homeless Liaison for six years, and I learn new ways and strategies about organizing my food room and clothing closet every year. I am going to talk to you today about the Food Backpack and Clothing Closet program I work on at the MVE Elementary and High schools. I come to the State Conference every year and take back new ideas and ways to help my program, and, with that said, I would love your feedback and any questions you may have.

I want to go over what I do with my food backpacks and food room.

Where Do We Find Food?

I get the bulk of the food from Rice Depot. I couldn't fill backpacks without the support from Rice Depot. I also have a church that brings me a little food each month. Lions Club International, First Security Bank and a church give me monetary donations to buy food that is needed to supplement what Rice Depot brings. Support from the area churches is very important, and our community wants to see the students have the right tools to be successful in the classroom. If a

student is hungry they aren't going to care about their school work. This is where we can help make a difference in their education.

School Organizations:

Also, school organizations can help. We have had EAST and FCCLA with the High School campus and Compassion in Action (CIA as we call it at the Elementary) that gather food for our back pack program. The elementary counselor would head up the CIA group to gather food, but the whole elementary would participate and have incentives for the most food donated, like extra PE time or a hot cocoa party.

As I am typing my speech the Mt. Vernon Baptist Church texted about leftover packaged food from their Fall Festival and wanted to know if we wanted some Cheez Its, animal crackers and candy. You never know what may come up that would help your backpack program, and this made my day! Anytime people call me about giving donations, I am ecstatic!

Here is a picture of Mr. Basil Julian from the Conway Evening Lions Club International, and he is presenting the MVE Backpack Program with \$200.00 for the fall, and they usually do the same thing in the spring.

Elementary FOOD FOR KIDS Application

Our school was chosen to participate in the “Food For Kids” program. Students will be provided with a backpack or sack every week or two. They are filled with nutritious foods that are ready to eat snacks or can easily be prepared by them. These backpacks are handed out on a **NEED BASIS**, and, if you feel this would help your child with hunger after school or on weekends, you are welcome to sign up. After I review the applications, you will know that your child or children have been accepted when they bring home their first backpack. We want students to feel good so they can have the best education possible. The snacks are a special sponsorship provided by the Arkansas Rice Depot “Food For Kids Program”.

The Mt. Vernon-Enola School District will begin the program in September or October. If you are interested in receiving a food pack, please fill out this application and return it to Novela Leach (Elementary Secretary) or contact Kris Hodge at 501-849-2211.

Students must bring backpacks back to school the following Monday and put them in the blue tub in the cafeteria to be refilled. Please talk to your child about bringing food home on the bus. The backpacks are not to be opened on the bus and “shared” with other students. If this happens, students could lose backpack privileges.

You are welcome to call Kris Hodge (Youth Services) at 501-849-2211 if you have any questions.

Student Name _____

Grade _____ Teacher _____

Contact Information:

Parent Name _____

Phone # _____

Our Elementary application procedures:

At the elementary, I send out food applications to every student. After waiting a few weeks so all applications come in, the elementary secretary and I go through the applications and weed out the ones that have accidentally filled out to much paper work or that we feel may not qualify at this time. We make sure the neediest are taken care of, and it is hard for a student to concentrate on school work if he or she is hungry.

I haven't found a way to be totally discreet about who gets backpacks. This year I have 25 backpacks to be filled at the elementary and a total of 51 children, these are brothers and sisters and little ones that are at home.

Filling Backpacks and Community Service Hours:

Every year I pick a senior or a junior that can drive to fill the backpacks at the elementary for voluntary community service hours. I make sure these students have good grades and can drive, and they want community hours for college. Colleges do look at this, and it has helped a student in the past get into the college she wanted to attend. This is a good way to get students involved, and it is usually an eye opener for them.

I number the backpacks from 1-25 and the high school senior fills them according to the list I have given her of how many children are in the family. I hand the backpacks out on Friday

afternoon. The elementary secretary calls the students to come to me at the end of the day, and they take them home for the weekend.

Show pictures of backpacks and food room at the Elementary.

Our High School application procedure:

High school kids are harder to reach and are embarrassed to ask for help, so I go over my homeless list, and if I hear of a family in need, I put applications in an envelope and have the students take them home to their parents to fill out. I have 12 backpacks, sometimes more, to fill at high school. I fill these backpacks myself on Friday, and the students come by my food room and get their backpacks as they are going to the bus. These backpacks are numbered so I can keep up with who has picked up.

Show picture of backpacks and food room at the High School.

High School FOOD FOR KIDS- Backpack Application

Our school was chosen to participate in the "Food For Kids" program. Students will be provided with a backpack or sack every week or two. They are filled with nutritious foods that are ready to eat snacks or that can easily be prepared by them. These backpacks are handed out on a **NEED BASIS**, and, if you feel this would help your child with hunger after school or on weekends, you are welcome to sign up. After I review the applications, you will know that your child or children have been accepted when they bring home their first backpack. We want students feel their best so they can have the best education possible. The snacks are a special sponsorship provided by the Arkansas Rice Depot "Food For Kids Program".

The Mt. Vernon-Enola School District will begin the program in September. If you are interested in receiving a food pack, please fill out this application and return it to the High School office.

Students will receive a food pack every week or two if possible. Students must bring backpacks back to school the following Monday and put them in room 7 in the red tub to be refilled. Please talk to your child about bringing food home on the bus. The backpacks are **NOT** to be opened on the bus and "shared" with other students. If this happens, students could lose backpack privileges.

You are welcome to contact me Kris Hodge (Youth Services) at 501-849-2221 if you have any questions.

Student Name _____

Grade _____ Teacher _____

Contact Information:

Parent Name _____

Phone # _____

Waste Prevention:

I have had complaints from bus drivers telling me that students are peer pressured sometimes to hand over their food, or they are just hungry, and they open their back packs. Then their friends or other students ask for food. This food is for students to take home for them and their siblings to eat. Also, there are reports that they throw the trash on the floor of the bus. One bus driver suggested that I zip tie the zippers and the students can cut them off when they get home. This would help with other students asking for their food and with making sure that siblings get their share of the food. I haven't started doing this yet, but would like to get the elementary principal's feedback about implementing it.

Any Questions about the Food Backpack program?

Clothing Room:

I have clothing rooms on both the high school and the elementary campuses. All the clothing comes from community donations. I go through the clothes and throw away anything not suitable to keep. The clothing I keep, I take home and wash and bring back to school to hang up or fold and put on shelves. I also get donated shoes that I take home and wash and let them air dry and spray them with Lysol.

I have two ladies that volunteer their time to organize and go through the clothing that I have washed and returned to the high school and elementary campuses. With the monetary donations, I buy sale items for students that are needed, but usually I ask for donations. Our staff and community are very supportive, and if I ask for certain items, I always get it.

Receipt book

I have people who donate clothing that want receipts for their donations to file on their taxes. I fill out a receipt and send it to them, usually by mail. I have had people put sticky tags on the bags with their address so I can send them a receipt, or sometimes they will email their address to me.