

# United Way of Northeastern MN's Buddy Backpack Program Survey Results

**2018-19**  
*School Year*



# During the 2018-2019 school year, United Way of NE MN's Buddy Backpack program served:

- A total of 1,000 children, providing them with meal kits for 35 weekends (more than 35,000 food kits were packed and distributed!)
  - 850 on the Iron Range in 14 school districts and at all Head Start sites
  - 150 in Koochiching County in four school districts and at KOOTASCA Head Start



United Way  
of Northeastern Minnesota's

**BUDDY  
BACKPACKS**

# The need for Buddy Backpacks is high in Northeastern Minnesota:

- 1 in 5 children struggles with hunger
- An average of 47% of children qualify for free or reduced lunch





To evaluate Buddy Backpacks, surveys were conducted with school staff and participating children

*100% of school staff find value  
in Buddy Backpacks  
with 84% stating the program is VERY VALUABLE*



# Because of Buddy Backpacks...

- 95% of children's **HEALTH** and **WELL BEING** was improved
- 79% of children participating felt **CARED FOR**
- 68% of children had an increase in their **ENERGY LEVEL**
- 63% of children participating felt **RELIEVED**
- 47% of children participating improved their **ATTENDANCE**





- 69% of school staff reported that children come to school on Mondays better prepared to learn because of the food they receive through the Buddy Backpack program

*(The other 31% weren't sure)*



# According to school staff, Buddy Backpacks exceeds or meets expectations in the following percentages for these categories:

- 100% - Variety of food items
- 100% - Nutritional quality
- 100% - Age-appropriate food items
- 100% - Quantity of food items for the weekend



# Here's what school nurses and teachers had to say...

*The easy-to-prepare foods fill in a gap in support for the families that are served. It helps them feel more self-sufficient and capable.*

This program impacts children in our school in every aspect of their life.

Students worry less about availability of food. Children don't come as hungry to school on Mondays which would impact their learning ability

We have a couple students who have NOT missed a Friday, and I believe it's due to the Buddy Backpack program.

The children and parents look forward to their Buddy Backpacks weekly - I have heard how it helps them get through the week.

*We have kids who probably wouldn't eat some weekends if it weren't for this program - thank you!*



# Here's what school nurses and teachers had to say...

A child at my school receives his Buddy Backpack from his teacher here at school. By doing so, this child displays smiles of joy and appreciation. It is unusual to see a kid so young be so appreciative and thankful. This positive experience has turned his life around both academically and socially. This little bag of nourishment definitely goes along way in his life!!

Both the personal hygiene kits and the meal kits have made a huge impact on students' lives. I had a young lady thank me multiple times and tell me how much the personal hygiene kit meant to her to receive. She just didn't have enough money for shampoo AND conditioner, let alone a new toothbrush!

The attendance of some of our middle schoolers has increased. They know that food bags went out on Fridays or before school breaks. They wanted to be sure they had food at home for the weekend or break.

Several children will come on Monday morning to say how they enjoyed the food they received.

# Here's what school nurses and teachers had to say...

We're very thankful that the United Way remains dedicated to this program. In addition to what it provides for the kids, it seems to be a catalyst for understanding need in our area and inspiring volunteerism!

Thank you for supporting this program. It's critical to the health and support to some of our students.

We have a junior high girl who comes to the office every Friday, at the end of the day, just before she gets on the bus. She has a genuine smile on her face as she grabs the bag of food, and tells us to have a great weekend as she leaves. It's the only consistent interaction we have with her, and she DOES NOT miss it, for anything!

# ACCORDING TO school nurses and teacherS, CHILDREN HAVE THE FOLLOWING UNMET NEEDS in addition to food-insecurity:

- Clean clothes
- Shoes
- Winter gear (boots, snow pants, jackets, mittens, gloves, hats)
- Hygiene products
  - Specifically deodorant
- Snacks during school time
- School supplies
- Access to mental health care / therapy
- Assistance purchasing eye glasses
- Access to health care and oral health care services
- Socks
- Underwear
- Parent education / family support
- Secure housing



# New Building = New Possibilities

In June of 2018, United Way of NE MN moved into our new building, which has a warehouse attached for Buddy Backpack food storage and packing sessions!





# Volunteers make Buddy Backpacks possible!

- **21** volunteer packing sessions were held
- **1,055** volunteer spots were filled, with many volunteers participating in more than one session
- More than **2,700** hours were contributed by volunteers to pack meal kits
- The value of the volunteer hours contributed is over **\$66,000**
- Nearly **700** hours were contributed to deliver meal kits to schools
- More than **35,000** Buddy Backpack meal kits were packed and distributed



We asked School Nurses, Teachers and School Representatives:

*“If we had capacity to expand to include more children next year, how many ADDITIONAL children, over and above the number enrolled this year, would need Buddy Backpacks your school?”*

They responded that **140+** additional children in their schools would be in need of Buddy Backpacks



# Hygiene Kit Packing Party

On December 12, 2018, volunteers helped UWNEMN pack hygiene kits for Buddy Backpack children. The event was sponsored by Paul Janssen CPA.

Funding for the hygiene kits was donated in part by Minnesota Power and Boise Paper/PCA. Volunteers paid to participate, with their registration fee going toward the purchase of hygiene items.

**1,000 hygiene kits were distributed!**



# We asked kids - “Why is Buddy Backpacks important to you?”

Buddy Backpacks makes me happy because I can't concentrate when I'm hungry.

I don't usually have food so the Buddy Backpack kits definitely help!

They really help me get through the day without having an empty stomach.

I've gotten through some rough days of being hungry because of Buddy Backpacks. It's hard to work on an empty stomach.

It helps me support my family.

We have little food at home.

I get really hungry throughout the day to when I get Buddy Backpacks it makes me feel happy because then I have things to snack on.





To all UWNEMN BUDDY BACKPACK  
volunteers, donors and supporters...

