THE LINK

YOU'RE FEEDING THE FUTURE OF OKLAHOMA!
Dear Friend,

Students across Oklahoma are beginning a new year of learning. As our schools work to educate kids’ growing minds, we need your help to bolster their healthy development.

Food is the most essential school supply. Boys and girls who don’t always have a full pantry to count on begin the new school year at a disadvantage. Kids struggling with hunger are also struggling with behavior issues, illness and more. The truth is that hunger must end before learning can begin.

That’s why I’m so excited about our Food for Kids Match Campaign! Thanks to the Masonic Fraternity of Oklahoma, Benvenuti’s Ristorante, David Gorham and two anonymous donors, every dollar you give will stretch to provide 10 MEALS for hungry kids until we reach the $300,000 matched total!

Will you help us get there? Your continued support will connect kids with the tools they need to succeed in the classroom and achieve their full potential.

I hope you’ll flip to page 6 of this special back-to-school edition of The Link and meet Kristin, a friend and former client who reminds us of the amazing things kids can accomplish. This issue is full of stories from children who are better able to achieve their dreams because of you.

I’m thrilled to see the impact our matching gift challenge will make in communities across central and western Oklahoma. I’ve been able to meet so many students who just need a little help to boost their success. You can provide that boost, and the children we serve together are so grateful for your partnership.

Thank you for being a lifeline to our Oklahoma children and their families!

Gratefully,

KATIE FITZGERALD
Chief Executive Officer

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“I’ve known about the Backpack Program, but never have I seen it more important or more effective to students than this year,” says Karen Lampe, school counselor and Backpack Program coordinator at Madison Elementary in Norman.

Karen has worked in education for nearly 30 years. She transferred to Madison from another school in Moore, where only 6 students participated in the school’s Food for Kids Backpack program. At Madison, 58 kids are on the program.

Because of her vast experience with children, Karen can usually tell when kids don’t have consistent access to good nutrition. She sees the effects of hunger mainly in students’ behavior — they tend to be especially quiet and reserved or overly rambunctious. But when they’re fed, she sees improvement.

Karen says though they’re only in elementary school, most of the kids she serves are aware that they may not have enough to eat at home. They check in with her early in the week to make sure they’ll be able to get their backpacks on Friday, and many become anxious before school breaks.

She remembers one little boy who picked out two snacks from his bag and told Karen he’d have to share the rest with his little sister or she wouldn’t have anything to eat over the weekend.

Unfortunately, Karen says hunger is not unusual at Madison, and she knows her school isn’t the only one facing such challenging circumstances. Thousands of children, and their families, across central and western Oklahoma go to bed hungry every night.

That’s why your gifts are so greatly appreciated — and so greatly needed. The Backpack Program is more than a source of nutrition; it’s something kids in need of food assistance can depend on when many other things in their lives feel uncertain. Your support is meeting a basic need so that students can learn, grow and excel.

“Thank you so much,” Karen says to friends like you. “[The food] makes such a difference in their lives. The difference is so astounding.”
Thank You to Our Generous Partners!

Jersey Mike’s Day of Giving
Thanks to Jersey Mike’s Subs and its customers, $70,000 was raised to fight hunger for Food for Kids. On March 29, as part of the organization’s nationwide Day of Giving, Jersey Mike’s donated all proceeds from its metro-area stores to fight childhood hunger in Oklahoma. Their gift will provide 350 children with food for an entire school year through the Backpack Program.

Feeding Hope and Letter Carriers’ Drive
Thank you, Oklahoma, for your support of the Feeding Hope and Letter Carriers’ Food Drive in May! Presented by APMEX.com and the Cresap Family Foundation, the event raised enough food and funds to provide more than 2 million meals.

Devon Employees Stuff the Truck
More than 460 Devon Energy employees helped the Regional Food Bank on May 23 by sorting and filling pantry boxes during the seventh annual Stuff the Truck event. In a matter of hours, Devon employees sorted nearly 273,000 pounds of food into boxes — enough to fill seven tractor-trailers with food!

Walmart’s “Fight Hunger. Spark Change.” Campaign
Thank you to Walmart and its customers for helping raise funds to fight hunger in Oklahoma through the “Fight Hunger. Spark Change.” campaign in April. In total, $218,631.68 was raised — enough to provide the equivalent of more than 1 million meals!

Express Employment Professionals
Express Employment Professionals International Headquarters and Oklahoma City metro Express office employees raised enough donations to provide more than 11,300 meals for the Regional Food Bank of Oklahoma as part of the company’s International Day of Service, Brand It Blue Day, June 10.

Oklahoma Gazette’s Restaurant Week
In June, restaurants around the metro offered pre fixe lunch and dinner menus with a portion of the proceeds benefiting Food for Kids. Thank you for fighting childhood hunger!

S&B’s Paid It Forward
In June, S&B’s Burgers donated $1 to the Regional Food Bank of Oklahoma’s Food for Kids Programs from every Indian Taco Burger sold during the month of June. Thank you for your support.

Produce For Kids Fought Hunger
Through June 30, Homeland Stores fought childhood hunger by partnering with fresh fruit and vegetable companies. When specially marked “Produce for Kids” items were purchased, a donation was made to Food for Kids.

Food for Kids Match | Now – September 30
All gifts to Food for Kids through September 30 will be matched, up to $150,000, thanks to The Masonic Fraternity of Oklahoma, Benvenuti’s Ristorante, David Gorham and two anonymous donors. Please give today to help us meet the match at foodforkids.us or call 405-600-3136.

Governor Mary Fallin’s Seventh Annual Feeding Oklahoma Drive | October 1 – 31
The statewide, month-long food drive kicks off October 1 and benefits the Regional Food Bank of Oklahoma, the Community Food Bank of Eastern Oklahoma and partner agencies across the state. To learn more, visit feedingoklahoma.org.

Hoop’s Harvest | October 12
Learn more about the Regional Food Bank and how you can help fight hunger in Oklahoma. Join us for a one-hour luncheon Thursday, October 12. For more information, please call Kendra Loper at 405-600-3172 or email kloper@regionalfoodbank.org.

Beach Boys benefit Concert | October 27
The Beach Boys, America’s Band, features Mike Love and Bruce Johnston and will make a stop at Riverwind Casino as part of their World Tour to help raise money for the Regional Food Bank of Oklahoma’s Food for Kids programs. Tickets can be purchased online at Riverwind.com or by phone at 405-322-6464.

Oklahoma State Fair | September 14 – 24
Visit the News 9 booth at the Oklahoma State Fair and help us raise donations for Food for Kids!

Students Against Hunger | September 25-November 10
Sign your school up to participate in this annual student-led food and fund drive! Donations benefit the Regional Food Bank and its partner agencies in central and western Oklahoma. For more information, contact Natalie Wood at 405-600-3174 or nwood@regionalfoodbank.org.
Every so often, you meet someone whose story makes a truly lasting impression. For us at the Regional Food Bank of Oklahoma, Kristin was one of those people. Here’s just a glimpse into how you’ve helped change her life...

Kristin has spent most her life not knowing where her next meal will come from. Now a graduate from the University of Central Oklahoma, she remembers not having food in the pantry as a kid, but she figured her family was just like everyone else’s.

Her dad worked in construction and lost his business after the housing bubble burst. Her mom’s accounting job couldn’t always stretch to cover monthly expenses for the family of five.

“I remember times when my parents would wait until all us kids had eaten before they would eat their meal,” Kristin says. “At the time, I didn’t understand why. I do now.”

Around the same time, her mother took a second job to cover her sister’s additional medical expenses while her dad did whatever extra odd jobs he could find. Her parents’ worked so hard to provide the necessities for Kristin and her two siblings, including visiting church pantries when needed.

Years later, when Kristin was a college student working three jobs, she hoarded food to protect it from her roommates. She was consistently stressed about having enough to eat until a Regional Food Bank representative came to speak at her school and told her about the college food pantry. It was in that moment that Kristin realized she had struggled with hunger for most of her life.

When she looks back on these hard times, Kristin remembers how well people treated her and her family when they reached out for food assistance. To her, that’s the ‘Oklahoma Standard’ — we are neighbors who want to help each other.

Kristin was so moved by her experiences receiving food assistance that she has become an Americorps volunteer with the Regional Food Bank, working with other volunteers to give back.

“Thank you,” she says to friends like you. “You’re changing generations — giving kids hope that they can become something.”

Support the Regional Food Bank all Year Long!
Making a recurring gift is an easy, sustainable way to support those in need of food assistance in our community! By joining our group of monthly donors, feed365, you can ensure that we are able to provide critical food for hungry children, families and seniors all year long! You can enroll in automatic payments which saves time, postage and reduces the Regional Food Bank’s fundraising costs! To sign up or for more information, visit www.regionalfoodbank.org/fight-hunger
Chesapeake Energy Corporation is an invaluable partner in the fight against hunger in Oklahoma. Their efforts involve everything from regular volunteer shifts in our warehouse to generous financial support to executive advisement through Board membership.

Brandon Brown, Manager in the Data Management Services at Chesapeake, currently serves on our Board of Directors and on our IT Planning Committee, which helps the Regional Food Bank of Oklahoma modernize our database management and prioritize current projects by providing strategic counsel.

“There is nothing more basic and more important than food in people’s lives,” Brandon says.

His work is a shining example of Chesapeake’s partnership — their associates use their practiced skills to help further the cause of hunger relief in so many ways.

Each holiday season, Chesapeake generously offers to match donors’ gifts to the Regional Food Bank to make twice the impact in the fight against hunger in Oklahoma. This past December, Chesapeake also collected food and monetary donations to place under their giant “Giving Tree” to be given out to local non-profits, one being the Regional Food Bank. But their involvement doesn’t end there — employees are given paid time to volunteer, and many spend their time on hunger relief efforts.

“It’s a great way to make a big impact,” Brandon says of supporting the Regional Food Bank’s hunger-relief efforts. “A little bit of money goes an extremely long way.”

Beyond simply wanting to connect neighbors with the food they need to thrive, Chesapeake has chosen to fight hunger because they believe in the efficiency and effectiveness of our organization and hope to expand our scope.

We are so fortunate to have Chesapeake in our corner as we work to bring hope in the form of food to our struggling neighbors. Thank you for joining us in the fight against hunger!

Plan on the Future
Continue what you’ve started...and consider a planned gift to the Regional Food Bank of Oklahoma. When you make a gift through a will, trust or bequest, you can make a lasting impact beyond your own lifetime. You may be surprised at the many different ways you can leave a legacy with the Food Bank, including gifts of stock, mutual funds, real estate, beneficiary designations and more! For more information, visit our estate planning page at regionalfoodbank.planmygift.org.
As a Regional Food Bank of Oklahoma supporter, you’re among an incredible group of people who do everything they can to see our community grow healthier and happier. An active community is critical in achieving the goal of providing every Oklahoman in need of food assistance with nutritious food. The committee of five staff, parents and former students who work to ensure the kids at Britton Elementary in Oklahoma City are fed is a great example of the impact you can have in the lives of Oklahoma children struggling with hunger.

Every Friday during the school year, Britton partners with the Regional Food Bank to send chronically hungry girls and boys home with backpacks full of nutritious, kid-friendly food for the weekend. They even send enough for kids to share with their younger siblings.

Through the Backpack Program, which Britton has termed ‘Bison Backpacks’ in honor of the school’s mascot, children receive food every Friday.

Cindy Morey, one of the committee members, says the Backpack Program helps staff collaborate with students’ families to identify other areas of need the school can help address. Program coordinators go above and beyond to alleviate childhood hunger — Cindy says they’ll even deliver packs of food to students’ homes if they call in sick.

“Kids who were coming to the cafeteria looking for extra food during the week are no longer showing up hungry on Mondays,” Cindy says of the program’s impact.

Having food on the table seems so simple — but it couldn’t be more important to growing children and their families who are struggling to make ends meet. Cindy sees your generosity firsthand. Last school year, she got a note from a mother with children at Britton who received weekly backpacks. She was recently hired at a new job and wrote to thank Cindy profusely and let her know they’d no longer need extra food.

“Parents are so grateful,” Cindy says. “They come out on Fridays and thank all of us.”

You make all this possible! Families across central and western Oklahoma are thankful for you this fall.