

LWSF announces campaign to help kids start school year strong

Pantry Packs is a featured beneficiary of Start Strong campaign.

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This week, nearly 30,000 students walk into new classrooms in the Lake Washington School District. One may hope these kids will be excited to be a school, ready to learn, and equipped with what they need to succeed. But thousands of these children may struggle with the worry of when they will be able to eat.

In LWSD, around 3,300 students qualified for free or reduced-price meals in the 2017-2018 academic year. For these kids, going back to school may mean going back to a regular meal schedule. These programs can be a relief to struggling families, but can create concern over what will happen when school is not in session, including weekends.

That's where Pantry Packs comes in.

“Over the weekend, without access to school breakfast and lunch programs, many children in our community struggle to find nutritious meals,” Pantry Packs team leader Lauren Gaddy, said in a press release. “We’re here to fill the weekend hunger gap—to alleviate the anxiety of food insecurity—and help students come to school ready to learn.”

Pantry Packs is a grassroots organization that provides hand-packed bags of shelf-stable food to more than 830 students in LWSD every Friday during the school year. In the last school year alone, they discreetly delivered 26,000 packs of weekend food to children without consistent access to nutritious meals at home.

Lake Washington Schools Foundation provides the administrative backbone to support this all-volunteer organization, and this fall, Pantry Packs is a featured beneficiary of its Start Strong campaign.

“Twenty-five dollars sponsors a full month of Pantry Packs for a food-insecure child,” Lake Washington Schools Foundation Executive Director Dr. Larry Wright, said in a press release. “It’s not much for some people—maybe a decent bottle of wine, teriyaki for two, or a latte per week—but for a little kid who goes home to an empty refrigerator, it’s everything.”

For more information about the Start Strong campaign, visit <https://www.lwsf.org/startstrong.html>.

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