

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE



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Channel One Regional Food Bank Expands Childhood Hunger Programs in Rochester Public Schools

To combat the hunger crisis, Channel One along with the City of Rochester, Olmsted County, the Rochester Public Library, and Rochester Public Schools have come together in a unique partnership to help address this food gap in our community. These organizations have partnered to apply for and receive State funding that will increase accessibility and the amount of food sent home with elementary school students who would otherwise not be able to access free meals at school on the days that they are distance learning and will not have enough food to eat over the weekend. Channel One and its community partners will also safely deliver food from the Channel One food shelf to the homes of RPS students and their families that need food and do not have another way to access it.

Channel One Regional Food Bank and the Rochester Public Schools have partnered for several years to provide weekend food to students who would otherwise not have enough food to eat at home and would come to school hungry on Monday mornings. The program has evolved over the years, growing from churches packing food into cloth bags for a couple hundred students at select schools to a robust program that reaches each public school with 1,200 students receiving backpacks weekly and food pantries located on-site at the Community Schools.

The COVID-19 pandemic has posed major challenges to the public-school system and increased demands on the Food Bank. With many students participating in exclusively virtual education in the fall, and elementary students attending school in person only two days per week, combined with the largest economic downturn since the Great Depression, without a coordinated intervention for students that rely on federal free and reduced price meals, RPS students are facing a hunger crisis.

“We are so glad to be able to use new technology and meaningful partnerships to get more food to these kids who are being affected by the changes in our school system, as well as reduce the administrative burden of the food delivery process on teachers and administrators.” Shares Virginia Merritt, Executive Director at Channel One Regional Food Bank.

Parents may see permission slips come home from school with their children to sign up for this program or they can call the Rochester Public Library hotline at 507-328-2822, Monday – Saturday 9am and 7pm to sign up as well.

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Channel One Regional Food Bank, a member of Feeding America, strengthens food access and builds healthy communities. Channel One operates food programs to serve local and area needs such as: a food bank, food shelf, mobile pantry, Backpack Program, and Nutrition Assistance Program for Seniors (NAPS). Channel One Regional Food Bank mobilizes organizations, volunteers, and donors to serve the network of more than 200 nonprofit programs that provide food for children, adults, and families in need. Channel One serves 14 counties across southeastern Minnesota and western Wisconsin. For more information, call 507.287.2350 or visit helpingfeedpeople.org.

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<https://www.rochestermn.gov/departments/administration/cares-funding>*