***GOLDEN BACKPACK PROGRAM: THE POWER OF ONE AND THE POWER OF ROTARY***

It was 2008, one individual, a Golden Rotarian, saw a need, had an idea, and shared that idea. More than 450 children in the Golden community were ‘going hungry’. Their major food source was through ‘free and reduced school lunch programs’; thus, they had little to eat over the weekend.

When a child does not have access to regular meals and is uncertain of when they may eat again they are experiencing the epidemic known as “chronic childhood hunger.” Families who cannot afford food or do not have regular access to food are considered “food insecure.” Kids experiencing chronic hunger may not only suffer from poor health, they can also be denied the opportunity to reach their academic, athletic and social potential. Chronically hungry students may have the following issues:

* Lack of concentration
* Lethargy or general fatigue
* Stomachaches
* Headaches
* Irritability or mood swings
* Disciplinary problems
* Increased aggression

For some, food insecurity may never go away - causing both anxiety and depression.

Working together with the community, a concept was born, and a pilot program, which consisted of a small group of children, in need of ‘weekend food’. Golden Rotarians created, the “Weekend Sack Lunch” program, giving these children access to food on the weekends. And the *Golden Backpack Program (GBP)* was born.

One school became 10 schools. The “Weekend Sack Lunch” expanded to not only weekends, but an entire summer lunch program, the “Snack-n-Wagon” which saw delivery of food to hungry children in various locations, five days per week!

Then, what could only develop from ONE & Rotary, a program, not only for children, but the entire family. The “Fresh Food Co-Op” is a small “food market” located inside the *New Hope Community Church*. Families are pre-qualified and assigned color coded cards, depending on family needs. Families come to the market and shop, pay with their color-coded cards, returning home with healthy, fresh food for their families.

As the GBP celebrates 10 years - of volunteers raising funds, gathering & delivering food, in a sensitive manner. GBP is a 501(3)(c) organization giving back to the Golden Community.

From the power of an idea and many Rotarian’s, this feeding program grew and along the way, the *Golden Backpack Program* was identified and recommended by the Rotary International President, Sakuji Tanaka, to the White House, where it was recognized as a “Champion of Change” for its innovation in solving the hidden childhood hunger, making sure that children have the nutrition they need so that they can learn, thrive, and be all that they can be.

For donation or volunteer opportunities, please contact the Golden Backpack Program via email at info@goldenbackpack.org or to make a donation, please send a check to: Golden Backpack Program, Inc., PO Box 19056, Golden, CO 80402, or make an on-line donation at <https://goldenbackpack.org/get-involved/donate>