

Planning Continues for Backpack Program in Auburn to Begin 2012-13 School Year

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Representatives of Auburn churches, civic organizations and other area entities continue planning to start the Backpack program at Calvert Elementary School in September. On Tuesday night, May 22, about 25 persons attended the organizational meeting held at St. Paul Lutheran Church, Auburn. Church officials offered the use of their facility as the base of operations for the program. St. Paul Lutheran is across the street to the west of Calvert. The Backpack program will be a partnership with Calvert Elementary School, the Food Bank of Lincoln, and church and community organizations in the Auburn Public Schools district. Besides churches, there was representation from the Auburn Optimists, Auburn Rotary, Peru State College, American Legion Post 23 and Southeast Nebraska Community Action. Those who attended divided into groups to discuss public relations, volunteer coordination and finance.

Volunteer Coordination

Representatives of several organizations have volunteered to fill plastic bags with food items on Thursdays during a particular month. Four or five volunteers are needed weekly. A volunteering organization will be needed for the months of December 2012; and April and May 2013.

Public Relations

Plans include an informational booth at the Nemaha County Fair in July and an entry in the county fair parade. A kickoff event is planned in early August before the 2012-2013 school year starts. Matt Davison, Tecumseh native and former Husker football player, will be invited. Davison, through his Creating Captains programs, has contributed \$5,000 to fund the local Backpack program during its first year. The event may also include musical entertainment, children's games and food. It was suggested to hold it at one of the schools.

Finance

The goal is to raise at least \$5,000 to 6,000 annually the next five years. It is hoped that the Davison contribution will carry the program through its first year. Contributions will be sought from organizations, churches, businesses and families. It is hoped to involve the entire community. According to the Food Bank of Lincoln it costs about \$200 to feed one student for an entire school year through the Backpack program.

Families Interested in Participating

Sharon Pollard, Calvert principal, said application letters were sent out the last week of school. She said parents of 24 students from 11 families had indicated interest in participating. Letters will be sent again in August. The application letter will also be on the Auburn Public Schools website.

After applications are reviewed, applicants will go through a confidential screening process. School officials will select 20-30 participants for the program. Officials will work hard to meet the needs of all interested families. There is a need for the program, Pollard said.

For 36 weeks effective Friday, Sept. 7, a backpack filled with about four to six pounds of food for the weekend will be sent home with participating families. Children are responsible for picking up the backpack at the Calvert office and returning it the following Monday. A voucher to be redeemed for a free gallon of milk will be sent monthly. A voucher for a carton of eggs will be sent home six times and a voucher for bread will be given out about 10 times during the school year.

Items in the backpack will include: cereal, fruit, canned fruits or vegetables, Tuna Helper, peanut butter and jelly or macaroni and cheese. The food consists of primarily purchased food

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by the Food Bank of Lincoln. The food bank serves 16 Southeast Nebraska counties. Anyone with any questions or concerns, please contact Pollard at 402-274-4129 or spollard@esu4.org.

Next Meeting Scheduled

The next meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, June 19, at 7 p.m. at St. Paul Lutheran Church, Auburn.