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June 2021 – One Million Meals

## How were Families to Manage?

Beloit is no stranger to food insecurity, but on March 16, 2020, when Governor Evers mandated that all Wisconsin schools close their doors due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the School District of Beloit immediately knew they must address hunger in our community. How were families to manage without benefits provided to their children during this time with no access to food in school?

The School District of Beloit qualifies as a Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) district. CEP allows the nation's highest poverty schools and districts to serve breakfast and lunch at no cost to all enrolled students without collecting household income applications. Additionally, with the help from the USDA waivers passed due to COVID-19, meals continued throughout the summer in Beloit under the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP). SFSP allows districts to provide meals to any community member ages one to 18, regardless of residency or enrollment in the school district.

## We Became a Team

The district's food service partner began packing breakfast and lunch meals for a daily pick-up at each elementary and high school on March 15, 2020. Although we had many families pick up meals, we knew that getting meals to families living on the outskirts of Beloit would be a struggle. Fortunately, the district received additional services from the district's transportation partner, volunteers, and educators to help get meals out. These partners helped pack, distribute, and provide delivery services. We became a "team" to serve our kids and our community!

## Breakfast and Lunch Programs Alleviate Food Insecurity

Research shows that school breakfast and lunch programs effectively alleviate food insecurity and poverty, support good nutrition, and improve health and learning. Hunger is stressful and worrying about how you will feed your family leads to depression, anxiety, and devastating Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Children suffering from food insecurity often are aggressive, hyperactive, and irritable. Hunger makes it hard for a child to learn, especially during an uncertain time for them.

The "Grab and Go" offerings started at the Elementary schools for one-day packs (one breakfast and one lunch). As the USDA passed additional waivers that allowed Beloit families easier access to more meals, our foodservice partner worked alongside the district to provide three-day meal packs on Monday and four-day meal packs on Thursday.



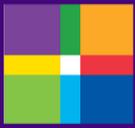
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We found this was a much simpler way of handling meal distribution, as it was much easier for parents and children to only come twice a week instead of all five days for meal pick-up.

When school resumed in a cohort model on April 8, 2021, food service began providing Seven-day meal packs on Wednesdays at the Elementary schools. In addition to the Seven-day meal packs, the district food service partner began feeding all enrolled students participating in face-to-face learning within our buildings.

### We Served more than 1,000,000 Meals

The School District of Beloit served more than 1,000,000 meals in the past year with the help of donations from area schools, Dominos, and Panera. Additionally, the district purchased six hydroponic gardens in which teachers grew lettuce during distance learning. Families received the lettuce produced by the hydroponic gardens during meal distribution dates. It's amazing what can happen when everyone pulls together with a common goal and mission. In this case it was to ensure that all children in our community had access to healthy, nutritious meals seven days a week. Together we are #BeloitProud.

### Fun Facts

What does 1,000,000 meals look like? Here are a few fun facts:

8,000,000 ounces of milk, or 1,000,000 pints of milk, or 62,500 gallons of milk

250,000 pounds of fruit (apples, oranges, watermelon, strawberries, blueberries, etc.)

250,000 pounds of vegetables (broccoli, cauliflower, lettuce, red and green peppers, jicama, etc.)

125,000 pounds of protein (sandwiches, pizza, chicken nuggets, quesadillas, chicken patties, etc.)

125,000 pounds of 100% whole wheat grain (crackers and bread products)

