

Our Mission

The mission of One Community Now, a 501(c)3 faith-based organization since 2009, is working together, changing lives with a focus on eradicating childhood hunger (Pack-A-Sack weekend school program), empowering families out of poverty through education (Getting Ahead and Connections programs), and ending veteran homelessness (Operation Stand Down intervention program). We bring together community partners—public and charter schools, churches, community organizations, local businesses, and the local government—to maximize the effectiveness of our outreach service to the underserved members of the Pasco County community in Tampa Bay.

Our dedicated volunteers are a key element of our success. In 2020, our 786 volunteers provided over 12,576 hours of service to the community by coordinating efforts with our community partners; communicating with our families; distributing food to our Pack-A-Sack children at temporary distribution centers set-up when the schools closed due to Covid-19; facilitating workshops on life skills, goal setting skills, job search skills, and computer skills in our Getting Ahead and Connections programs; and organizing the annual Operation Stand Down 3-day event for our homeless and at-risk veterans which provides them free medical, dental, mental health, and legal services.

Request to Feed 1,338 Children on the Pack-A-Sack Program in Pasco County, 2020-2021

Our Pack-A-Sack program in Pasco County is there to alleviate child hunger on the weekends. The children in our program qualify for the free and reduced-price school meal program but have little or no access to food on the weekends.

This year, Pasco County school staff have identified 1,338 children as needing help. The children are identified by parental/guardian request or referral from a teacher or social worker.

We provide each child ready-to-eat food for breakfast, lunch, and dinner through the weekend. The student sacks include items such as nonperishable milk, oatmeal packets, granola bars, juice boxes, canned chicken, peanut butter, crackers, and pudding cups. These items are kid-friendly, nonperishable, and require no preparation or refrigeration as, sadly, many of these children lack proper adult supervision at home.

Our Pack-A-Sack program has been alleviating child hunger since 2011. Our agreement with Pack-A-Sack partners—churches, rotary clubs, local charities—is that we share the cost of food 50-50. The cost of food per week per child is \$5.00, so this cost is split with the partner at \$2.50 per week per child.

In past years, our main source of program funds has come from our annual outdoor Hunger Walk which generated \$74,756 in 2018 and \$117,251 in 2019. This annual fundraiser, typically planned for April, had to be cancelled this year due to Covid-19.

Working together, the Executive Director, Program Director, and dedicated network of volunteers acted on the unprecedented situation and made it possible to hold the event virtually, raising \$59,830. Through grants and generous donations from members of our community, we have come close to funding the cost of the program for the 1,338 children. At this time, we are still short by \$20,400 as shown on the table below.

We respectfully request a donation of \$20,400 to allow us to feed the 1,338 children identified by the Pasco County school staff as needing help for the 40 weeks of September 2020–May 2021, including holidays.

Pack-A-Sack Program Budget, 2020-2021	Amount
Program cost for nutrition sacks for 1,338 children for 40 weeks	\$133,800.00
Funds generated by the Hunger Walk virtual event	(59,830.00)
Grants and public support received	(48,650.00)
Social media fundraising	(4,920.00)
Pack-A-Sack unfunded amount	\$20,400.00

Proven Benefits of Our Program

A study on Health and Academic Achievement by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in 2014 established a clear link between student health and academic achievement: better grades, better attendance, better behavior, better concentration, and lower dropout rates.

We found these same benefits in surveys of our teachers and parents. The teacher surveys we conducted in 2019 revealed that the children in our Pack-A-Sack weekend school program were more focused at school, better behaved, and had better attendance. The parent surveys in 2019 revealed that parents saw an improvement in their children's behavior and well-being.

During this difficult economic and uncertain time, the Pack-A-Sack program is more important than ever. Proper nutrition is essential for children's development. Additionally, the Pack-A-Sack program brings normalcy and comfort to the children who are experiencing unusual levels of instability in their lives. But, most importantly, this program keeps children fed.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit our request for assistance.