The Story: Solving hunger today for a hunger free tomorrow.

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Dear Friend,

I sincerely hope you, your family and friends had a great summer. As we move into the fall season, things begin to change. The weather switches from sweltering temperatures to cooler mornings and evenings. Summer activities, like camps, vacations and swimming get replaced by football games and school.

One thing is for certain — school year 2021 should bring some sense of normalcy back to children who attend school. Schools are much more than a place of learning. They provide structure and rules, engagement opportunities for children to find their place among their peers, and a reprieve from homes that may not be as supportive as the ones we have. And lastly, schools feed and nourish children whose families’ incomes are lower than most.

That is why the Brazos Valley Food Bank (BVFB) deems it imperative that we partner with schools to ensure students still have that lifeline when class isn’t in session. Let me explain. Families whose children receive free and/or reduced-priced breakfast and lunch at school may struggle with securing nutritious, reliable food in the evenings and on the weekends.

BVFB is only as effective as our partnerships. Because of your commitment to fighting hunger, the relationships we’ve established with our schools back in 2005 remain strong to this day. Your support with our schools back in 2005 remain strong to this day. Your support means better outcomes for students. To learn more about how you help our community fight back against hunger, enjoy the stories in this edition of The Story.

Gratefully,

Theresa Mangapora
Executive Director

Becky and Don Russell Share Their Blessings

Becky and Don Russell don’t even remember when they gave their first gift, but the couple has been regularly donating to charities for the last several decades. Becky says, “At some point, you have to look back on your life and say, ‘What did I do besides serve myself?’”

Both Becky and Don have worked as teachers within our community. Becky has taught first grade and piano while Don is a professor of electrical engineering at Texas A&M. They are involved in a multitude of nonprofits and sacrifice their time to volunteer often.

Don carries his favorite Mahatma Gandhi quote in his billfold to remind him why they do what they do...

“There are people in the world so hungry that God cannot appear to them except in the form of bread.”

Don explains, “Giving bread to someone who is hungry is the closest thing you can do to giving them God.”

To others who are not yet involved, Don urges, “You don’t have to give a huge donation...a lot of little things add up. When you’re blessed, you have an obligation to bless others.”

On behalf of all the Brazos Valley community members we are proud to serve, thank you, Becky and Don, for your incredible legacy of generosity!

To address its students’ need for food, Neal Elementary School participates in BVFB’s BackPack Program, which aims to alleviate childhood hunger by providing food-insecure children with shelf-stable, low preparation, healthy food over the weekend and during school breaks.

“A lot of the times, the BackPack is [a child’s] saving grace,” says Sarah. “When they go on breaks, it’s hard... We have no clue what they go home to.”

Sarah says since COVID-19 hit, she has noticed a dramatic increase in the need for food. And children without enough to eat can’t concentrate or engage in learning.

“It makes it way harder to focus on schoolwork when I’m hungry,” says Valeria, age 9. She’s very thankful for her BackPack and says she shares it with her two siblings.

Getting his weekly BackPack makes Rafael, also age 9, “feel like someone cares about me,” he says. He’s proud that he can make his own meals from the food in the BackPacks and especially likes when there’s macaroni and cheese.

“I want you to know the profound difference you’re making in these kids’ lives. You’re saving their lives,” Sarah says. “Some don’t know where their next meal is coming from, but they have this bag.”

It’s hard to express just how much your support is feeding the future of our community. Thank you isn’t enough!