



Backpack
Buddies

Generosity *Matters*

2025 IMPACT NEWSLETTER

Putting Hope on the Table



Your Impact in our Biggest District

Celebrating 8 Years with FreeYumm!



A Message from our Co-Founders

As 2025 unfolds, we're buzzing with excitement and ready to make it a great year. And with approximately 2,000 kids on our waitlist, the need for your support has never been more vital!

Due to rising costs, it now takes \$25 to fill a bag of weekend food. However, we're determined to meet the demand without compromising the quality of our kid-approved bags. In this newsletter, we're excited to tell you about the tastier, more nourishing food options we have for kids this year.

Looking ahead, we hope to grow our program and connect with more partners so more children get the food they need. We can't wait to continue our incredible work with you—thank you for making a difference!

With heartfelt appreciation,
Emily-anne King & Joanne Griffiths
Co-Founders, Backpack Buddies

What's On the Menu: 100% Kid-Friendly Food

We're always on the hunt for new kid-friendly food options that are easy to prepare and more nutritious. Here's what's new this year:



Organic, low-sodium lentil and vegetable soup for healthier, substantial meals

Milk-to-go now provided every other week



Culturally respectful, vegetarian-friendly options like rice and beans

Three servings of fresh produce included every week



Leave a Legacy of Hope

Imagine a future where children have all the food they need—every day of the week. You can help us end weekend hunger in BC and make a difference for thousands of kids by leaving a gift in your Will.



Scan the code or visit
[www.backpackbuddies.ca/
your-legacy-of-hope](http://www.backpackbuddies.ca/your-legacy-of-hope)
to learn more.



The Growing Demand in Surrey

950 Food Bags Every Week Thanks to You!



In Surrey alone, we work with 60 schools to provide 950 weekend food bags each week.

Kam Grewal, principal at Forsyth Road Elementary, began her role at the North Surrey school four years ago. Sometimes she'd go to Costco to buy food for students with her own money to make sure they ate over long weekends or spring break.

"When I first got here, I really saw the impact Backpack Buddies was having," she says. Since she started, the number of families receiving weekend support has grown from around 30 to 45, as both the cost of living and the population in North Surrey grow.

Many kids in the program at Forsyth Road are recent refugees to Canada whose families often struggle with the high costs of food, unfamiliar stores and products, language barriers, navigating cities without a vehicle, and overcoming trauma.

Yet even families who have been in Canada for generations are still struggling with the high cost of living, Kam notes.

She recalls one family with six children who has had at least one student in the school for over a decade. The cost of food can skyrocket in families with multiple children.

"These families are absolutely facing food insecurity. We can help them with breakfast and lunch," she notes, "but Backpack Buddies is crucial for these families to have something to take home over the weekend."

Our partnerships with B.C. schools are critical to our collaborative approach to feeding hungry kids. Backpack Buddies is coordinated through teachers, administrators, and social workers, like Hailey MacIsaac, Forsyth Road's Child and Youth Care Worker.

When she started at Forsyth Road two years ago, the kids came to her to explain how Backpack Buddies worked—they couldn't wait to get their next bag.

"The kids themselves want it, and are advocating for it. It's a little treat for them to see what's in the bag." She notes that pepperoni sticks and seaweed snacks are particular favorites this year.

As a care worker, she has seen firsthand how hunger negatively affects children. They can become easily upset, have low energy, and have a hard time concentrating.

"When a kid is fed, it changes their whole behavior and their energy," Hailey says.

In addition to putting food on their students' tables, both Kam and Hailey see another benefit to Backpack Buddies: it shows their students that the community cares about them.

"It's so important for them to know that there are people in the community who see them, understand their challenges and are willing to take action," said Kam. "Our kids need to see those kinds of positives in the world."

Celebrating 8 Years of Partnership With FreeYumm!

We're thrilled to celebrate our eight-year partnership with FreeYumm, a local company helping us provide healthy, allergen-sensitive food options to kids. Every month we include a delicious FreeYumm bar, ensuring every child gets a treat they can safely enjoy.

Just like Backpack Buddies, FreeYumm started with a local mom named Sarah who saw a gap in her community and took action. When her son was diagnosed with multiple food allergies, Sarah was disheartened by the lack of food sensitive snack products—so she started creating her own!

FreeYumm teamed up with Backpack Buddies to help reach vulnerable communities regardless of their dietary needs or family circumstances. *"We strongly believe that every child deserves access to nutritious and wholesome food, which is why we partner with*



Backpack Buddies to help address hunger and ensure kids can focus on what matters most—their education and well-being," says Sarah.

For eight years, FreeYumm has generously donated snack bars, supporting children every month. We're so grateful to work alongside them, keeping kids from going hungry on weekends!

Using Retirement Well: Why Kaayla Ryane Volunteers!

In 2023, Kaayla Ryane retired from her career in the film industry. For the first time in a while she had time on her hands. She wanted to use it well.

"I find it unfathomable that so many kids go home hungry every weekend, or anytime for that matter."

Kaayla decided to take action, using her newfound free time to give back. She now regularly travels from her Vancouver home

to North Vancouver to pack bags full of much-needed food alongside other volunteers determined to put hope on the table each weekend.

"There isn't anywhere else I'd rather be volunteering. Quite honestly, I love the organization," she says. "I just wish I could have more shifts!"



Backpack
Buddies

Registered Canadian Charity: #837443233 RR0001

backpackbuddies.ca