



PRESS CONFERENCE

Snack Pak 4 Kids & The Tillie Project check presentation
Tuesday, January 10 at 10:30 a.m.
Snack Pak 4 Kids Warehouse, 2406 SW 3rd, Amarillo TX

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SNACK PAK 4 KIDS RECEIVES \$255,000 TO LAUNCH THE TILLIE PROJECT

Snack Pak 4 Kids® is proud to launch The Tillie Project, a resource for grandparent-headed households facing food insecurity due to the extra demands they face as grandparents raising their grandchildren.

According to a recent Snack Pak 4 Kids® survey of AISD counselors and social workers, as many as 3,000 AISD students live with or are being raised by their grandparents or great grandparents. Local AISD counselors indicate the number could be as high as one-third of those 3,000 families are vulnerable to food insecurity at any point during the school year. Nationally, data from Generations United indicates as many as 25% grandparent-headed households are experiencing food insecurity, which can have long-term health implications for the entire family and negatively affect a student's ability to learn and focus in the classroom.

To address the “grandfamily” food insecurity hidden in our community and impacting our students, Snack Pak 4 Kids® created *The Tillie Project*. The program is named after a retired teacher who is also a great-grandparent. Two years ago, Tillie drove across town seeking assistance through the summer Snack Pak drive-thru program to provide food for her two great-grandsons who were living with her at the time. She made too much money to qualify for traditional senior resources. Her story compelled us to look deeper, ask more questions, and ultimately start the program.

After sharing Tillie's story with multiple organizations across the Panhandle and Texas, the Carol K. Engler Foundation committed an initial gift of \$150,000. Along with seed money from the Mary E. Bivins Foundation and individual donors, Snack Pak will launch the project with a \$255,000 investment, ensuring those living in grandparent-headed households do not face the health and education impacts caused by food insecurity.

“The Carol K. Engler Foundation is committed to addressing the basic needs of vulnerable individuals and families. As a foundation, we understand the importance of tackling the issue of food insecurity in our communities. We firmly believe The Tillie Project will undoubtedly provide a tremendous boost in bringing the often-invisible issue of food insecurity in grandparent-led families to the forefront. The Carol K. Engler Foundation is proud to partner with Snack Pak 4 Kids, an organization that has a proven record of implementing bold and sustainable community-driven solutions.” said Sara Cady and Rachel Jordan of the Carol K. Engler Foundation.

The mission of the Mary E. Bivins Foundation is to enrich the quality of life in the Texas Panhandle by supporting the elderly, funding the education of Christian ministers, and addressing critical community needs.

“The Mary E. Bivins Foundation has been committed to addressing hunger and food insecurity among older adults living in the Texas Panhandle for over five years. The Foundation is proud to be a part of the effort to address this critical community need.” Katharyn Wiegand, president and chief executive officer, Mary E. Bivins Foundation, said.

Snack Pak 4 Kids works with school counselors and grandparents to provide boxes of brand new, brand name food. Grandparents can access the program once, weekly or monthly. Additionally, they are provided with a list of existing community resources. If those are not applicable or are insufficient for their needs, the counselor can submit a referral form for *The Tillie Project*. Grandparents can then choose from a pre-packed box or can order online and choose the food they need from a menu of items. The food is delivered to the school by volunteers during our weekly Snack Pak 4 Kids delivery.

A quote from the counselor survey: “We have a grandfather at our school who is raising three to five grandchildren at a time. He still works full-time and does school pick-ups at all the different schools that the children attend and is very involved in their schooling. We help out with clothes and supplies as much as we can, but I think that they are still struggling with food.”

“For over a decade, Snack Pak 4 Kids has been working to end weekend hunger for Amarillo ISD students. What started as a vision and act of service to 10 elementary students at Will Rogers Elementary in 2010, has grown to provide for thousands of children each week and over holiday breaks. From the original grocery style bag of shelf-stable food to the Snack Shak concept for high school students, this organization has once again recognized a unique need related to food insecurity with their newly implemented *The Tillie Project*. Grandparents hold a special place in the hearts of many people. The project supports those special grandparents in Amarillo who are serving as the primary guardian or caregiver for students. Partnerships are vital to the ongoing mission of educating students, and children and grandparents in Amarillo will be significantly impacted by the bold and gracious support of the Carol K. Engler and Mary E. Bivins Foundations. Amarillo ISD is thankful for the continued support of the Snack Pak 4 Kids family as well as the Engler and Bivins families.” Kevin Phillips, deputy superintendent for Amarillo Independent School District, said.

Additional Information:

Over the past years, Snack Pak 4 Kids has surveyed thousands of students. Each year we ask students if they're sharing their Snack Pak with anyone and consistently see that 8-10% of our students are sharing with their grandparents. This continued to reinforce the need in our community to examine the needs of our grandparents raising their grandkids.

Five years ago, with financial support from the Mary E. Bivins Foundation and High Plains Christian Ministries Foundation, Snack Pak 4 Kids began feeding seniors through a partnership with Heal the City free medical clinic to really understand if we provided nutrition to food insecure seniors, would we see a difference in their medical outcomes. Our data and study with Heal the City indicated there was a statistically significant difference in their weight loss and BMI, and there was a trend for improvements in their glucose, blood pressure and cholesterol. We continue to do a weekly grocery program for a select group of Heal the City seniors. This model has now been implemented at Amarillo Wesley Community Center and Bivins Village.

The Tillie Project joins a complement of services that Snack Pak 4 Kids has been building for twelve years: Snack Pak 4 Kids for students pre-K-8th grade, Snack Shak for high school students, Nutrition 4 Change food services for organizations outside of K-12, and our buying cooperative, which makes brand new, brand name food available and affordable to organizations and schools around the state. Other partners in our Nutrition 4 Change program include Amarillo College, City of Amarillo, Texas Oncology, BSA Hospital, Baptist Community Services, Northwest Texas Healthcare, and Harrington Cancer Center.