

Feeding Denver Kids Through the Backpack Society

June Everett founded [Backpack Society](#) (BPS) in 2019 with a mission to remove food insecurity as an obstacle for children so they can grow, learn, and thrive. BPS does this by providing a consistent bag of easy-to-prepare meals on the weekends to help students focus on important things – like being a kid.

“The most at-risk students for food insecurity are also the ones who are most affected by the achievement gap, and poor academic outcomes that can have lifelong effects,” June explains. “Students who are well fed can come in Monday mornings, ready to learn.”

Today, BPS partners with 33 schools across the greater Denver area and offers extended programming providing weekend groceries, stocking school pantries and snack drawers, feeding students and their families over the summer, and organizing special holiday meals for Thanksgiving and Christmas.

In 2021, June reached out to Parrish McLemore, then general manager of the Denver market, about getting Flowers involved in supporting the program and after meeting with her he “was all-in.”

Working with DSD, the sales team, and distributors, Parrish quickly set up a weekly donation of leftover product to Backpack Society by setting aside still-fresh loaves and snack cakes returned from grocery stores to make way for new inventory.

“We want to provide fresh, name-brand items that students will recognize and feel excited about eating,” Parrish says. “No one is ashamed to have Wonder Bread in their bag. We want them to eat the same things as their peers, the items they see on tv and in their grocery stores.”

He estimates they donate four or five trays a week – an average of 32 to 40 loaves of bread, which includes a variety of Dave’s Killer Bread, Nature’s Own, and Wonder products, in addition to Tastykake.

For Parrish, a former free lunch program recipient, it’s a cause that’s especially close to his heart. “Full bellies help kids focus in the classroom,” he notes. “Giving back and getting involved is a huge part of our mission here at Flowers. We want to be a part of the fabric of the community – this is just one way we’re making a difference.”

He hopes to expand the partnership with BPS in the future with on-site volunteering.

Supporting Hunger Action Month

September is [Hunger Action Month](#), a nationwide campaign designed to inspire people to take action and raise awareness of hunger in the United States.

Through our network of bakeries, Flowers supports Feeding America and independent food banks, soup kitchens, and other groups that provide meals and food to those in need. In 2020, we donated \$8.8 million in bakery foods toward this effort.

In honor of Hunger Action Month, this month on FLOconnect we’ll be profiling how some of our bakeries and facilities work with local entities to fight hunger by volunteering, fundraising, and donating to community initiatives. Stay tuned for more inspiring stories!