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**FOOD BANK**  
NORTHEAST LOUISIANA

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**Date:** May 1, 2013  
**To:** Mr. David B. Petty, Publisher  
The News-Star  
411 North 4<sup>th</sup> Street  
Monroe, Louisiana 71210  
**Fm:** Richard King, Executive Director  
Food Bank of Northeast Louisiana  
**Re:** Grant Request for \$5,000 from Gannett Foundation

This request in 2013 is for \$5,000 is to help the Food Bank of Northeast Louisiana (FBNELA) to sustain and strengthen our **BackPacks for Kids Program** in the upcoming 2013-2014 school year. Specifically, we are seeking this grant to help the FBNELA to meet the costs of purchasing specialized food for this acclaimed initiative. BackPacks for Kids is a highly effective childhood hunger program that is presently solving the life-threatening nutritional deficiencies faced by **450 very poor children** in Monroe, Louisiana. While these children are eligible and do receive free lunches at school, it is all too clear in many cases that this may be the only meal they consume. These children sometimes return to school on Mondays in a hungry – even famished – state, and their pain and inability to focus in class is very clear.

### Needs Statement

- objectives of the project to be funded
- whether the project is new or ongoing
- constituency to be served
- community and volunteer involvement

In the 12 parishes served by the FBNELA, 60,408 children attend public schools. Of that population, **an astounding 65% (39,475 children) are defined as “at risk”** by the Louisiana Department of Education because they do not have access to normal food resources and other factors. Even sadder and more alarming is the fact that our Backpack for Kids Program volunteers and staff are seeing nearly half of our program children exhibiting classic symptoms of “chronic hunger” – stealing food, hoarding food, asking other children for food, misbehaving in class, lethargy, and repeatedly asking when it is time to eat.

While a huge percentage of the FBNELA's regular warehouse food is consumed by children, childhood hunger is so serious in Northeast Louisiana that the FBNELA initiated the BackPacks for Kids Program in 2007. Each Friday and before holidays, the Backpack for Kids Program provides over 300 of our poorest children with 8-10 pounds of nutritious, kid-friendly foods to tie them over between the free meals they receive weekdays at school.

Backpacks for Kids has been designed to target the **poorest and most hungry children** in our service area by working in elementary schools where vast percentages of children receive free meals in school but have no such provisions over weekends or holidays. By working with donors, school principals, guidance counselors, teachers, parents, and dozens of dedicated, community volunteers, the FBNELA initiated Backpacks for Kids in the fall of 2007 by targeting 100 and then 175 needy children in two of the poorest public schools in the City of Monroe. Chronically hungry children were and are now identified by teachers and school staff using guidelines and warning signs for program eligibility. Confidentiality and discretion have always been priority and parents of participating children are requested to sign approval forms for participation.

In the **2013-2014** school year, Backpacks for Kids will continue to alleviate the most extreme cases of child hunger in our area by providing **450** hungry children with backpacks filled with food that is child-friendly, nonperishable, and easily-consumed. As in the last three years, the FBNELA will discreetly distribute "personal" food to children on the last day before the weekend or holiday vacation and collect empty back packs for re-filling at the beginning of the next week.



The FBNELA carefully plans to ensure that only nutritious, kid-friendly foods are stocked in our backpacks. These items include: Breakfast Items – Pop tarts, Granola bars, Cereal in bowls, Oatmeal, Fruit Cup, Milk, Juice. Lunch and Dinner Items – Macaroni and Cheese (microwave), Spagetti O's, Beef Stew, Beef Chili, Chicken Noodle Soup, BBQ Chicken, Vegetable Soup, Juice, and more. Snack Items – Pudding, Jello, Juice, Graham Crackers, Chez Its, and Fruit Cup. For the FBNELA's Backpack for Kids Program, plastic bags are filled at

our warehouse by loyal volunteers and staff, delivered to our participating school sites, inserted in waiting backpacks, and discreetly distributed to children on the last day before the weekend or holiday vacation. **There is no cost to participants in the Backpacks for Kids Program.**

The FBNELA's 12-Parish service area (including the specific program locations) includes low-income, working families; impoverished senior citizens; and thousands of poor children who too often miss meals. It is impossible to ignore that our area is affected by high rates of poverty, poor nutrition, and related health problems. In these

areas, sub-standard housing is the norm, not the exception, and problems like broken families, homelessness, substance abuse, unemployment, crime, and adolescent pregnancies round out this picture of hopelessness.

A fact of great concern and motivation to do more is that our counties with large Black populations also have extremely high poverty rates. The specific location where we are conducting our Backpack for Kids Program is Ouachita Parish. Ouachita Parish has 62% Caucasian and 36% Black people, with an overall poverty rate of 21.2% and a childhood poverty rate of 32.2%. **That means 1-out-of-every-3 children face chronic hunger in Ouachita Parish!**

All of the 450 children who participate in our Backpack for Kids Program in Ouachita Parish live at or below the Federal poverty level - a condition that almost always equates to missed meals and hunger. Since nutrition affects a child's cognitive, social, and emotional development, children who do not get the nutritious food their bodies need are more likely to have problems learning, growing, and interacting.

Our rationale for choosing to initiate and expand the Backpack for Kids Program is straightforward - no other childhood hunger relief program has worked as well in 1) targeting very needy children, 2) attracting and holding loyal program volunteers, 3) catching the interest and donations of foundations and individuals, and 4) gaining media attention.

There is an absolute cause-and-effect between the food provided by the FBNELA and the nutritional and emotional health of the children who are fortunate to receive it. We sincerely believe that every child who is enrolled in our Backpack for Kids Program no longer faces chronic hunger. The amount of food we provide each Friday, coupled with free school meals, and hopefully matched by some food at home, means it is not so long between meals for these children.

### **Sustainability Statement**

- **your organization's qualifications to carry out the project**
- **how the project will be evaluated**
- **plans for continued funding of the project, if applicable**
- **list of other funding sources, committed and applied for**

In partnership with 90 non-profit human service agencies in 12 Northeastern Louisiana parishes, the FBNELA plays a life-saving role in providing fresh, frozen, canned, and boxed food to families struggling to meet basic needs and seniors living on fixed incomes. While the cost of gathering and distributing millions of pounds of food in a service area measuring 6,575 square miles is considerable, no other hunger relief solution yields such high returns as an investment in food banking. This is often referred to as “the Miracle of Food Banking”.



As our community's # 1 safety net for hungry people, the FBNELA has a remarkable ability to recover fresh, frozen, canned, and boxed food and to redistribute it to those who are in need. **In fact, for \$1 donated, we provide \$12.40 worth of food – an amazing multiplier effect that is rarely matched in the non-profit community.**

The FBNELA recovers food from national manufacturers and retailers, supermarkets, food distributors, the USDA, FEMA, farmers, wholesalers, sportsmen, and through food and fund drives.<sup>1</sup> Last year, the FBNELA and its partner agencies recovered and distributed 3,000,000 pounds of food to hungry people, a value of \$5,070,000 to communities in Northeast Louisiana.<sup>2</sup>

The FBNELA is a highly respected non-profit organization that not only provides an essential human service, but also meets or surpasses a number of strict operating, health, and safety standards. The FBNELA is professionally audited and produces an IRS 990 and annual report. The Food Bank enjoys strong relationships with essential elements of Northeast Louisiana society including government, churches, the media, corporations and businesses, service clubs and schools, and area donors of food and financial resources.

Regarding project evaluation, our benchmarks to measure program effectiveness are responsible and adequate and will continue to include the questions: 1) did all program children receive a quality backpack of nutritionally balanced food that week, 2) did all children receive the required variety and mix of foods, 3) are sensitive issues involving human dignity handled quickly and effectively, and 4) are adequate food records and interactions with parents reported. These records and reports - the raw material for evaluating the program - will continue to be collected and reviewed by the FBNELA's Executive Director and Childhood Hunger Program Director.

The FBNELA's BackPack for Kids Program will most definitely be sustained beyond the year in which we are respectfully seeking funds from the Gannett Foundation. Our plans to raise the funds necessary to not only continue the program but to expand it as well include direct mail programs designed to build our individual donor base; increased

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<sup>1</sup> Regarding donors, the FBNELA has long recognized that the first step in the food banking process is to establish and maintain strong relationships within the food industry. Companies find themselves with small to large amounts of high quality product that are unmarketable for various reasons. They are often faced with the decision to dump or donate. One of the FBNELA's greatest strengths is its ability and reputation of making the donation decision an easy one. Instead of dealing with a large number of individual organizations that might not have the ability to quickly retrieve or to safely store and distribute food, the FBNELA allows donors to give the food to one organization that handles the complexities and responsibilities of distribution. The benefits to donors include reduced disposal costs, assurance of safe handling, good public relations, and efficient record keeping for tax benefits.

<sup>2</sup> Feeding America, the Nation's Food Bank Network, received an estimate of \$1.69 per pound for all food collected and distributed from a national accounting firm (KMPG). 3,000,000 pounds X \$1.69 = \$5,070,000. The FBNELA's 3 million pounds of emergency food equates to 2,400,000 meals for needy individuals, annually.

grant writing to local, state, and national foundations; stronger emphasis upon the time consuming process of developing planned givers; aggressive pursuit of all grant programs offered through our national network of food banks, Feeding America; and fundraising events specific to our Backpack for Kids Program.

**The most detailed indication of where the FBNELA plans to continue securing the funding necessary to execute our Backpack for Kids Program is found on our combined organizational/program budget for 2013 which is attached as required.** In a column to the right side of this budget (program services), it may be seen where we expect to secure resources to fulfill our Backpack program budget of \$139,061. Once again, we are seeking \$5,000 from the Gannett Foundation toward the purchase of child-friendly, nutritious food - budgeted at \$50,010.90 for the year. The following is a list of **funding sources, committed and applied for:**

<b>Volunteer Directed Gifts Through United Way</b>	<b>\$ 8,625.00</b>
<b>General Contributions</b>	<b>\$56,810.49</b>
<b>Special Events</b>	<b>\$ 9,337.50</b>
<b>Government Grants</b>	<b>\$ 9,337.50</b>
<b>Sales of Materials</b>	<b>\$20,250.00</b>
<b>Investment Income</b>	<b>\$ 900.00</b>
<b>Miscellaneous Income (includes grants)</b>	<b>\$22,354.05</b>
<b>Total Applied For</b>	<b>\$127,614.54</b>

As can be seen by comparing the sources of funds that are committed or applied to, the FBNELA is slightly short – in the amount of \$11,446.95 – of what we need to successfully carry out our Backpacks for Kids Program in 2010-2011. It is here that we are hopeful the Gannett Foundation can help.

