

POINTS COMMUNITY TAKES ACTION

WITH BELLEVUE LIFESPING

Better Together

Written by Rachael Eichner.

In late February, Washington State confirmed its first death from COVID-19. A short time later, the Bellevue School District closed for the safety of their students and staff. This has been a difficult and uncertain time for us all, but the coronavirus situation has been especially devastating for low-income families. When the decision to close schools was made, Bellevue LifeSpring knew we had to take immediate and critical action to ensure these children did not experience hunger or homelessness as a result of the virus.

Nourishment Now

Bellevue LifeSpring continues to work closely with the Bellevue School District to fill in any gaps in nutritional support for children in need. One of these gaps occurred when a high number of families were unable to make it to the food distribution sites due to factors out of their control.

Bellevue LifeSpring expedited the emergency extension of our Breaktime-Mealtime program and ordered \$550,000 worth of vouchers from our partners at Safeway. These food vouchers will ensure that 2,300 families have the nutrition they need through May.

“Thank you *so much* for making the vouchers happen in such short order. Many went in the mail today, and the families that need them most will get them soon. Thank you for working so hard on behalf of our most vulnerable students and their families,” stated Melissa Slater, the Equity Project Leader and National Board Program Coordinator for the Bellevue School District.

Bellevue LifeSpring also built a bridge between our partners at Amazon and the Bellevue School District to provide further nutritional assistance to families in need. Amazon donated 1000 \$50 promotional codes to families that are redeemable for eligible grocery, health, and personal care items sold by Amazon.com. This is for families that are in quarantine or don't have transportation to get to a Safeway store.

Points Community Members Jump into Action

It is a fact that Bellevue LifeSpring cannot do the work we do without the support of our community. We received a last-minute request from the school district on a Friday afternoon to provide breakfast for 750 students on the following Monday. In less than 72 hours, our partners at Safeway and a group of 15 incredible volunteers rallied to make this delivery a success. “When my friends and I found out the schools were closing, we knew there would be a gap in services for the many kids who benefit from free and reduced-price lunch and breakfast at school. So, when



Bellevue LifeSpring reached out to me the very next day, it was easy to rally this group. I had vehicles and drivers lined up within about 10 minutes to help deliver the breakfast in the morning,” shared Points resident and Bellevue LifeSpring board member, Beth Halvorsen.

Volunteers met at Safeway at 6:30 a.m. to pick up the food order, load it into cars, and make deliveries to seven district distribution sites. Many volunteers purchased and donated fresh fruit to deliver along with the non-perishable breakfast food.

Small Acts That Make a Big Impact

Points community members of all ages have stepped up to support Bellevue children during this uncertain time. From community members stepping up to make generous contributions to a local family donating, packing, and delivering 100 snack packs – no act of good is too small to make a big difference.

Emme, a first-grader at the Bellevue School District, wanted to do her part and make sure that community members who have lost their jobs have the nutrition they need. Emme originally started a small shop to earn money for a personal project. She sold handmade bookmarks, origami, and artwork to her friends and family and decided to donate a majority of her earnings to the Bellevue LifeSpring COVID-19 relief fund. Emme decided to give her profits to Bellevue LifeSpring because she knew that we were helping her fellow students and their families who need it most.

Emme didn't stop there. She learned how to use a sewing machine and made face masks to sell and raise even more money for Bellevue LifeSpring. Emme chose to make masks because not only would they keep her friends and family safe, but they were a great way to raise even more money to help her community. Way to go, Emme!



After Bellevue LifeSpring decided to close our office, volunteers stepped up to help us pack up all the items from our pantry and deliver them to the school district. The items were distributed quickly to families in need of food and hygiene products.

These are just a few examples of the steps our community has taken that show their dedication and commitment to the children in our community who are most affected by this crisis.

Looking Towards the Future

Bellevue LifeSpring will continue to be flexible and responsive as we work to determine the changing needs of our community's low-income children. Make an investment in the well being of Bellevue kids today by visiting our website, www.BellevueLifeSpring.org.

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