JOINING FORCES

When the COVID-19 pandemic hit our Bellevue community, it created a surge of challenges and needs. For Bellevue's 3,500 children living in poverty, the effects have been devastating. These challenges have called for a substantial amount of resources to ensure no child experiences hunger or homelessness during this crisis.

One thing this pandemic has shown is that we are better when we work together. This past April, Bellevue LifeSpring joined forces with two local organizations -- the Bellevue Schools Foundation and Rainier Athletes -- to respond to the enormous impact of COVID-19. They offered direct support to Bellevue LifeSpring's food voucher program to provide 2,700 students with nutrition.

Shared Community and a Common Mission

Our organizations not only share a local community, but our missions to support Bellevue children also align. By collaborating and leveraging our resources, we were able to achieve a greater impact.

Bellevue Schools Foundation, whose mission is to develop, promote, and fund the best possible learning opportunities for *all* students in Bellevue's public schools, contributed $40,000 to our food voucher program. "When the Bellevue School District recommended that food vouchers were the best way to feed our most in-need students, we turned to Bellevue LifeSpring for help," shared Colleen Turner, development director at Bellevue Schools Foundation. "During times like these, nonprofits need to share their expertise and resources because it is the most effective way of helping the most vulnerable in our community."

Rainier Athletes, who use sports and mentorship to direct at-risk students toward a path to achievement, contributed $10,000 to our food voucher program. "The current crisis has impacted students and families in many areas of their life. We recognize, especially during times like these, that we are stronger together," stated Jesse Franklin, executive director at Rainier Athletes. "Bellevue LifeSpring has a deep history of providing food to families in need, and we knew from the onset of the crisis that we could depend on them to meet the needs of our families."

Why Vouchers?

When schools closed, families who rely on free and reduced-price meals at school were left scrambling to provide food for their children. There were families that were not able to make it to the school district's food distribution sites during the limited distribution times due to transportation barriers, scheduling difficulties, and self-quarantining.

To fill this gap, Bellevue LifeSpring implemented an emergency extension of our Breaktime-Mealtime program. With the help of our partner organizations and the generosity of Points community members, Bellevue LifeSpring has provided Safeway food vouchers to 2,700 children and their families.

Rebuilding Together

It's hard to know what tomorrow or next month or next school year will look like. The year ahead will undoubtedly be difficult. Children in need and their families will continue to face challenges as they try to navigate the ripple effect of challenges brought on by COVID-19. At the time this article was written, Bellevue LifeSpring had already invested over $750,000 to provide food vouchers to low-income children. In addition to our nonprofit partners, Points community members made significant investments in the program as well.

"We have the power to come together to ensure that no child or family goes hungry or homeless. I know we can all rise to this challenge," shared Hunts Points resident Marilyn Herzberg. "While the need is great throughout the world right now, I love that we're focused on helping our local children and families. We really are neighbors helping neighbors."

While we don't know what the future holds, we do know that Bellevue kids will need our support more than ever. Please help us ensure no child experiences hunger or homelessness in the coming months.

Make a positive impact on a child's life today by visiting www.BellevueLifeSpring.org.