

# **FOOD AVAILABILITY**

## **200 More Ottawa County Students to Receive Sack Suppers from Kids' Food Basket**

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By Monica Scott

HOLLAND, MI - Kids' Food Basket will serve more students in Ottawa County beginning today, Monday, Jan. 23, with the addition of Holland Public Schools' Jefferson K-7 program.

The nonprofit organization works to attack childhood hunger by providing well-balanced evening meals that fill a gap that schools and families in Kent, Ottawa and Muskegon counties can't meet.

With the addition of Jefferson, located at 282 W 30th St, the organization says it will deliver Sack Suppers to nearly 700 kids at three schools in the greater Holland area. In April 2015, the organization announced it would service Holland Heights and Woodside elementary schools.

"Teachers can't teach and kids learn when they're hungry," said KFB Executive Director Bridget Clark Whitney.

"When given a consistent, nutritious evening meal, we are meeting an immediate need and making a long term impact," said Bridget Clark, who said because of this caring "can-do" community 200 kids at Jefferson will have the nutrition they need to thrive.

Jefferson, which has 409 students and 79 percent who qualify for free or reduced cost meals at school, was on KFB's waiting list. In order to take a school off the waiting list, the nonprofit required an increase in volunteerism, an increase in food donations, and financial capacity for three years.

Through the Sack Supper program, Kids' Food Basket serves 7,500 kids at 42 schools - 36 in the Grand Rapids area. More than one million sack suppers were distributed last school year.

There are five schools in Ottawa County still on the waiting list. All have at least 70 percent of their student population qualified for free and reduced cost breakfast and lunch.

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Sack Suppers contain items from each of the five food groups, officials say help kids stay on track in school and concentrate on learning, which leads to greater academic achievement and more opportunities.

Jefferson Principal Maria Yoder said the school is excited to kick off of the program today.

"This food will help provide the nourishment that our students need to be healthy and ready to learn," said Yoder, who said all students have been invited to participate.

Citing Kids Count data, Kids' Food Basket officials say more than 15,000 children qualify for free or reduced meals.