

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
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'Fill the Bus' campaign underway at Wegmans

Annual food drive benefits Foodlink's Backpack Program

ROCHESTER – Many children in our region don't know for sure how many meals they'll eat on a given weekend.

When the school bell rings Friday afternoon, this is a reality for more than 50,000 children in Foodlink's 10-county service area. The Backpack Program, however, is designed to help eliminate childhood hunger, and starting this week, Wegmans shoppers are asked to lend a hand.

The annual "Fill the Bus" food drive, which is organized through a partnership with Wegmans, 13WHAM ABC, FOX Rochester & CW Rochester, takes place **Sept. 8-23**. The food drive collects donations for Foodlink's Backpack Program, which allows food insecure children an opportunity to bring home a bag full of nutritious food over the weekend and during holiday breaks – when they no longer have access to school meals. Each Friday, a bag of food is placed in a child's backpack, which can be taken home to eat and share with their families.

About 1 out of 5 children (52,780) in Foodlink's 10-county service area is considered food insecure. Last year, Foodlink worked with more than 80 schools to provide about 50,000 bags of food to more than 4,000 children throughout the school year.

"Study after study shows the link between a healthy diet and success in the classroom," said Heather Newton, Foodlink's Director of Community Engagement. "The Backpack Program helps us improve the health outcomes and educational attainment of children and strengthen our communities – and we're so grateful for the public's support."

Starting Friday, Wegmans shoppers will see signs for the 2017 Fill the Bus campaign at 21 local, participating stores, with suggested items to purchase and donate. Pre-packaged bags of food ranging

from \$3 to \$10 are also available at checkout. The goal this year is to collect more than 250,000 pounds of food.

Suggested items include canned tuna and chicken (a high-need item), oatmeal packs, unsweetened applesauce cups, granola bars, macaroni and cheese, juice boxes (100% fruit), boxed raisins and canned fruit and vegetables (pop-tops preferred).

In four years, the campaign has collected more than 634,000 pounds of food, including more than 247,000 pounds last year.

For more information about the BackPack Program, and to learn how you can donate or set up a host site, visit www.foodlinkny.org.



About Foodlink

Foodlink is a regional food hub and the Feeding America food bank serving Allegany, Genesee, Livingston, Monroe, Ontario, Orleans, Seneca, Wayne, Wyoming, and Yates counties. Our operations alleviate food insecurity by distributing food to a network of human service agencies and target the root causes of hunger through our state-of-the-art commercial kitchen and dozens of food-related programs.

Last year, Foodlink distributed 17.4 million pounds of food, including 4.9 million pounds of produce. Foodlink's nutrition educators empower people to make healthy choices and our food access programs provide new access points to nutritious food in underserved communities. Our innovative approach directly addresses diet-related health disparities related to food insecurity. Learn more about our mission to end hunger and to leverage the power of food to build a healthier community at www.foodlinkny.org.