

Hello everyone,

It was great seeing all of you and the opportunity to share with the church what we are doing together at Goodness Now. As a reminder, Goodness Now is our new song and what we call the program that is replacing Blessings in a Backpack. Blessings in a Backpack is a national organization that provides backpacks and meals to kids on reduced or free lunch programs, we have just replicated this in our local community by adopting Ocean Avenue Elementary, right here in Middletown. Because we are doing all of the work, all of our dollars are going right to the kids meals, and we call our program Goodness Now. So let's talk about the Goodness we are doing right now, and how we can all help.



Ocean Avenue Elementary is our adopted school right here in Middletown, and out of the 300 children enrolled, over 32% of them are eligible for free or reduced lunch. Less than 5 miles from our church there are over 100 kids who depend on these meals as a major source of nourishment. With our current budget we have committed to provide backpacks with meals for 20 children for the school year. Our budget is to spend \$5.00 per child per week for 32 weeks. So with 20 kids that is \$3200 for the school year. As you can imagine \$5.00 is not a ton of money, but we are able to provide nourishment for the weekend for these children by packing non-perishable items. We are hoping to supplement these bags or stretch our budget by collecting food items at the church and through various events during the year. Attached to this is a list of items we typically pack in a bag, so any help provided is greatly appreciated. The jobs required for this ministry are not complicated but they are all very important:

The first job is **shopping**. We would like to assign shopping tasks to a group or small subset of members. This job is critical because we need to feed 20 kids on \$100 each weekend. If you or your group has an interest in taking on this important function, please contact me directly and we will work through those details.

The second job is **packing**. The Youth Group is taking on this responsibility and they will be packing meals every other Sunday. We will store the food and bags at the church, and we really appreciate the Youth Group taking on this responsibility.

The third job is **delivery** of the full bags, and collection of the empty bags each week. Every Thursday, except for holiday weeks, we are in need of a volunteer or group of volunteers to deliver 20 full backpacks to Ocean Avenue Elementary and collect the empty backpacks from the previous week. This job involves loading the full backpacks at the church, delivering them,

and returning the empties to the church. This takes about an hour per week in total. If you can help with this, please contact me directly, and we will coordinate the logistics and notify the school of your information.

The fourth job is **solicitation** of local stores for donations to help extend our Goodness. Attached is a letter you can use to solicit local businesses and we are looking for either a one-time donation or a continued commitment to help our ministry. A great example of this would be a commitment from a local grocery store to provide 100 apples or oranges each month. A case of chicken noodle soup would be great. This is a great way for us to partner with our local merchants to continue to drive local Goodness. If you have an interest in being one of our solicitors please let us know and we will set up a conference call to make sure we don't overlap calling the same merchants.

Shopping items and donation items we are in need of, these are smaller packages and each backpack is the same:

Mac-n-Cheese	Granola Bars	Pop-tarts	Breakfast Bars	Cans of soup
Ramen Noodles	Pasta	Rice bowls	Peanut butter cups	Oatmeal
Oranges/Apples	Fruit Snacks	Small cereals	Juice boxes	Vienna sausages
Beefaroni	Canned spaghetti	Pudding cups	Fruit cups	Apple sauce
Box of raisins	Cheese crackers	Almonds/Trail Mix	Chips/Pretzels	Animal Crackers
Sauces	Canned veggies	Ritz crackers	Tomato sauce	Canned Tuna

This is not an exhaustive list, but these are the main staples for our backpacks. It allows for nourishment and variety. The items need to be non-perishable so we don't have a great selection of fresh veggies or fruits. If you have other ideas or would like to donate other items please let us know. We could not be more excited about the work of this ministry and look forward to working with all of you to make it grow and flourish.

What an exciting time in our church and for this emerging song. We have an opportunity to positively impact the lives of children and families right here in our local community. We have so much to be thankful for and a great opportunity to do some Goodness Now!!! Thanks in advance for all of your help, and I can't wait to speak with you.

Best,

Maddy and Steve Denton

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