

## We've Got Your BackPacks



The “We’ve Got Your BackPacks” program at Yarmouth Wesleyan Church provides backpacks of healthy food to students / families on a weekly basis during the school year to help offset food insecurity. The food is distributed on Thursdays, close to the weekend, when food at schools is not available. Gift cards are provided at the last distributions prior to Christmas and March Break. Through a grant received in March 2024, gift cards to cover July and August were distributed in June.

Presently, our partner schools include: Yarmouth Elementary School, Meadowfields Community School, Yarmouth Alternative High School, Yarmouth Consolidated Memorial High School, École Secondaire de Par-En-Bas, Drumlin Heights Consolidated School, and Plymouth School. There are staff at the schools who determine which students receive a backpack based on family information gathered. Yarmouth Wesleyan Church does not have input on which students are selected.

The program is run by a team of 8-12 volunteers most weeks. It is a joy to share with them the feedback that is received about the program, including:

- From an elementary student: “Look what’s in those backpacks! You guys rock!”
- From a parent: “Grateful to have it. It’s very helpful. We respect and appreciate your heart and effort. May God bless you all. Thanks a lot.”
- From another parent: “This program has helped me get caught up on some of my bills.”
- From a school administrator: “This weekly backpack is the only consistent element in some of these kids’ lives.

### Quick Facts:

- WGYB launched in November 2022. The program launched with 38 backpacks distributed. Presently 75 backpacks are distributed weekly, serving an estimated 300 people.
- In the 2023-2024 school year, 2153 backpacks were distributed (the plan is for empty backpacks returned weekly to the schools by families and exchanged for a full one).
- Each backpack costs \$25-\$30 to fill. Total weekly costs average \$2,000.
- The WGYB budget for the 2024-2025 school year is \$73,500.
- From launch in November 2022 through the end of November 2024, \$161,271.79 of food has been distributed to students and families (including the gift cards of Summer 2024).
- To date, the program has been roughly 85% funded by government and organizational grants.
- A BBQ hotdog fundraiser was held at the Acadian Day festival in August 2024, raising over \$5,500.
- WGYB has 3 local business partners, and we are working to grow this number to ensure long-term sustainability of the program.

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