

**CITY OF ROCHESTER HILLS
OFFICE OF THE MAYOR**

BRYAN K. BARNETT, MAYOR

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Rochester Hills Charity Receives Brooksie Way Grant
Launch of “Blessings in a Backpack”

Rochester Hills, MI – Blessings in a Backpack, a charity that provides weekend meals to qualifying students in need is kicking off in the Rochester School District thanks to the support of Oakland County Executive L. Brooks Patterson who awarded a mini grant to the charity using proceeds from the Brooksie Way Half Marathon & 5K.

“This is a great way for Rochester Hills to see first hand, one of the many positive impacts that the Brooksie Way has brought to our community,” states Mayor Bryan Barnett.

Blessings in a Backpack is a national program that feeds school children who are eligible for free or reduced meals during the school day. The Michigan chapter also runs the program in Avondale and Clawson and several other districts in the region.

“The grant will fund a pilot program in four schools through the end of the school year,” said Cheryl Whitton, president of Blessings in a Backpack – Michigan Advisory Board. “Without the grant, the pilot program would not have begun before fall at the earliest.”

Currently there are 1,800 school children eligible for the program in the Rochester School District. Every Friday, eligible students receive their backpacks with staples that require little or no preparation. The First Congregational Church has become the official camp backpack headquarters, where the food will be stored and volunteers will gather to stuff the backpacks each Wednesday at 4pm.

“It is evident that the need is there, we have seen an overwhelming response of those who are able to participate in the program,” states Kim Williams, Rochester Program Coordinator.

Throughout the course of a school year (September thru May) it costs \$80 to send a child home with adequate food each weekend. As a result of this expense the local program has partnered with the Rochester Hills Meijer’s, who has offered significant discounts on the food items, and the Rochester School District, who have volunteered to pick up and deliver the backpacks to the schools.

In order to make Blessings in a Backpack sustainable throughout Rochester Public Schools, continued donation and community support will be needed. Donations can be made through the Greater Rochester Community Foundation to the Rochester Blessings in a Backpack. If you, or your volunteer service group is interested in donating your time to stuff the backpacks, please contact Kim Williams at (248)330-4525.

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