



## JUNIOR LEAGUE OF MINNEAPOLIS

*Women building better communities®*

**For Immediate Release**

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### **Local Backpack Buddies Program Delivers Over 30,000 Pounds of Food in the Twin Cities**

MINNEAPOLIS, MN (March 30, 2011) With many parents struggling to find the means to feed their children, the Junior League of Minneapolis (JLM) helps give parents peace of mind one school and one grade level at the time. According to the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), 17.2 million children in the United States are unable to consistently access nutritious and adequate amounts of food necessary for a healthy life. The JLM, a local nonprofit, is addressing this issue at the community level by implementing a program called Backpack Buddies.

The JLM adopted the Backpack Buddies program from the Junior League of San Angelo, Texas where the program currently serves over 300 children. The JLM saw the same need to help reduce the effects of childhood hunger in the Twin Cities. Backpack Buddies is designed to bridge the gap between Friday and Monday when food may not be available. The JLM adopted the first and second grade levels at Andersen Open Elementary in Minneapolis where 98% of students receive free or reduced lunches. The JLM partners with Second Harvest Heartland to purchase food at a reduced rate to fill backpacks with five pounds of easy-to-prepare food on a weekly basis. Every week, approximately eight volunteers meet to fill backpacks and deliver food at Anderson Open Elementary. Each backpack weighs five to seven pounds and contains two breakfasts, two lunches, three dinners and three snacks, enough food to feed the student and often much of his or her family.

"The Backpack Buddies program is a terrific way to personally impact our community," said Sarah Dubois, Backpack Buddies Committee Chair. "With each student we help, we know we are providing food for the student and likely his/her family for the weekend. Our hope is that by providing food, we're helping to increase classroom engagement and ultimately helping to contribute to more students finishing high school."

In the 2009-10 school year, the JLM and Second Harvest Heartland fed 165 first graders at Anderson Open Elementary with over 30,525 pounds of food.

This year, the Backpack Buddies program increased its capacity to serve 200 students in the first and second grades at Andersen Open Elementary. The JLM also partnered with the Lake Street Cub Foods and the Minneapolis Police Department to provide 200 families with a Thanksgiving holiday meal. The program has not only been happily received by students and parents, but by faculty as well.

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“Without the Backpack Buddies program, many of our young Andersen students would go hungry on the days that they are not in school,” said Denise Wells, Principal at Andersen Open Elementary School. “The Junior League of Minneapolis has helped our students be more prepared for learning, healthier and has increased attendance rates. As a school principal, I can’t express enough thanks for the gifts the JLM provides for our children. They are an amazing organization and partner.”

With a growing need among area children, the JLM is committed to growing and expanding Backpack Buddies to additional grade levels as funding becomes available. The JLM finances its Backpack Buddies program with donations, grants and various fundraisers including its recent Duets fundraising event and the American Girl Fashion Show in March.

To learn more about the JLM’s various projects or to donate, please visit [www.JLMinneapolis.org](http://www.JLMinneapolis.org).

### **About the Junior League of Minneapolis**

The Junior League of Minneapolis (JLM) is a nonprofit organization made up of women committed to promoting voluntarism, developing the potential of women and improving the community through the effective action and leadership of trained volunteers. Established in 1923, the JLM continues to develop projects to fill needs within the Minneapolis community. Past projects include helping to found the Greater Minneapolis Crisis Nursery, Free Arts Minnesota and the Jeremiah Program. Current projects address issues from hunger to nutrition to literacy.

Nord, Mark, M. Andrews, S. Carlson. United States Department of Agriculture, Household Food Security in the United States, 2009.

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