

Food Program Loves Extras

By Donna Harris

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Too much corn in your garden? Tomatoes growing like weeds? The Backpack Buddy program in Pascagoula could use your extras.

The program, sponsored by United Christian Outreach, feeds designated children and their families by providing boxes filled with enough food for breakfast, lunch, dinner and snacks from Friday night to Sunday night.

The children are identified through the Pascagoula School District. They are referred by school counselors and teachers who recognize the needs of their students. The program serves students in Pascagoula schools only, said co-chairman Bob Donald.

With this sister program to Our Daily Bread, United Christian Outreach aims to relieve children from worrying about meals.

"If a child is concerned about where their next meal is coming from, the anxiety is going to occupy his time and he won't be able to concentrate on his studies," he said.

Other such programs are at First Baptist Gautier and St. Paul's Methodist Church in Ocean Springs, he said.

The program takes its name from a similar feeding project through America's Second Harvest, which sends children home with a backpack of food for the weekend.

At Our Daily Bread in Pascagoula, about 50 boxes are filled with such items as canned meats, packaged breakfast foods, snack items, beans, pasta, peanut butter and dry milk. "Most families come down on Thursday afternoon and pick up food for the weekend," he said. "We're packing up food for the entire family, parents included."

The program could serve about 100 families, he said.

Families like to pick up their boxes because that gives them access to the lagniappe table, which is filled with fresh fruits and vegetables donated by area gardeners, farmers and grocery stores.

"We've had people bring bushels of corn to us fresh from the fields and we put it on the table," Donald said.

Jerry Lee's Supermarket donates next-day pies and cakes. "I bet we have the best desserts in town," he said.

Donald said donations of cash are used to buy food at discounted prices. "We can feed a child for weekends for a month for \$25," he said.

Any donation made should be designated "Backpack Buddies."

To donate

Deliver canned, bagged or fresh food to Our Daily Bread, 3502 Old Mobile Highway in Pascagoula, on Monday through Friday from 8 to 11 a.m. To make cash donations, call 762-7510.