

This month, our special offering is for what our church calls the Backpack Ministry. The Rush City Schools Food Backpack Program began at the C.E. Jacobson Elementary School in November 2022. An employee from the school contacted Pastor Nathan about this program and asked if First Lutheran would coordinate the program for the Rush City Schools. Pastor Nathan had an informational meeting with interested church members, and it was decided by that group that First Lutheran would coordinate the Backpack Program. This program is partnered with the Family Pathways Food Shelf in North Branch to purchase and deliver food to Rush City students whose families need extra help.

Each year, at the beginning of the school year, parents can fill out an application if they want their family to participate in the Backpack Food Program. The bags of food are discreetly placed in the participating student's backpack at the end of each week.

Once a week during the school year, volunteers pack bags with about 6 food items such as: pasta, soup, macaroni & cheese, fruit, vegetable, chicken, tuna, instant oatmeal, peanut butter, juice or granola bar. The food is given out at the end of the week so there are items available for the students on the weekend. Food is purchased from Second Harvest through the North Branch Family Pathways Food Shelf. Volunteers are needed each week not only to pack the weekly food bags, but also to bring the totes to the school, and/or help transport the Second Harvest delivery from the Community Center to First Lutheran Church. [Click here to volunteer.](#)

A one-time grant from Family Pathways and donations from local organizations and individuals funded the program for the 2022-2023 school year. We were also able to get a Chisago County SHIP Community Partner Award to purchase shelving to store the food on, utility totes used to transport the food to school in and a cart. Now, the program relies on donations from organizations and individuals to fund the program.

Our congregation pledged \$100 to the backpack program out of our regular offering. This month, if you give to the Special Offering, it will help to fulfill that pledge. If a greater amount is gathered through special offering, the council may vote to increase the donation to Family Pathways this year beyond our pledged amount.

If you would like to donate directly to Family Pathways, click here or mail a check or cash to:

Family Pathways Food Shelf  
Attn: Rush City Food Backpack Program  
6413 Oak Street, North Branch, MN 55056

Be sure to write ***Rush City Food Backpack Program*** in the memo of your donation.

Thank you for your help in keeping this program going. Any questions about the ministry or volunteering can be directed to Shari Schlagel. Any questions about Special Offering can be directed to Muriel Bungert.