

Class XXIX
May 28, 2013

Education Team



DAILY BREAD

These words are for you, my friend,
You, who without hesitation,
Gave me four pieces of bread
When in my life there was hunger.
It was nothing, just a bit of bread,
But it warmed my body,
And it still burns in my soul
Like a grand feast.

Anon.

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Executive Summary

The Education Team of Leadership Montgomery, *Class XXIX*, conducted an assessment of the various educational-based needs in the City of Montgomery, Alabama. The survey resulted in the formation of a project to address the weekend nutritional needs of homeless students in Montgomery County elementary and middle schools. The initial goal of the team was to design, test, and model a program at Capitol Heights Middle School. The team formulated a plan that would address the nutritional needs of children by utilizing a process known as *FOODforKIDS-MONTGOMERY*¹. The overarching premise of this process was to use backpacks that would be distributed to students so that they might have sustenance while away from their respective schools, particularly on weekends and holidays. Studies on the issue were reviewed to suggest that these types of programs offered a significant impact in the lives of students in similar types of programs (see [Feeding America](#).)

The project was to include workshops to enable parents to improve life and work skills. There was a strong consensus in the Education Team that these elements added value to the process to improve the lives of students and families in the *FOODforKIDS-MONTGOMERY* program. However, due to various circumstances, this component was not developed in this current project cycle. It is the recommendation of the Education Team that this aspect of the project be developed in its entirety or to utilize the services of organizations such as the Montgomery Area Food Bank that offers these services.

As relayed to the Education Team in 2012, there were an estimated 600± homeless children in the Montgomery Public Schools. The backpack program is precisely the process needed to counter hunger and its ill effects on children. The *FOODforKIDS-MONTGOMERY* project resulted in a proven process to provide these children with nutritious meals at times needed most—weekends and holidays. While there is no extensive data analysis in this cycle, the Education Team suggests that data be collected and assessed for improving the *FOODforKIDS-MONTGOMERY* program in future applications of this important process.

¹ © Education Team of Leadership Montgomery, Class XXIX

Education Team:

Members Information



<p>Larry Curry Manager, Supplier Quality Development Hyundai Motor Manufacturing Alabama C: 334.296.0089; O: 334.287.8099 Email: keysdude05@gmail.com</p>	<p>Brett Hall Deputy Commissioner Alabama Department of Agriculture & Industries C: 334.318.6081; O: 334.240.7101 Email: brett.hall@agi.alabama.gov</p>
<p>Bob Lane, Team Leader Director Emeritus USAF Air University Library Maxwell AFB C: 334.328.4473; H: 334.272.7122 Email: robertblane@msn.com</p>	<p>Allen Newton Lead Pastor St. James United Methodist Church C: 850.381.3770; O: 334.277.3037 Email: allen@sjlife.com</p>
<p>Kenley Obas, EdD Associate VP for Information Technology Alabama State University H: 334.224.1882; O: 334.229.5000 Email: obas818@gmail.com;</p>	<p>Kenneth Edward Scott, EdD Sr. Instructor – CIS/IT: Director – CISCO, AITP, SkillsUSA, & Carpe Diem for Christ Trenholm State Community College C: 334.312.4751; O: 334.420.4392 Email: kscott@trenholmstate.edu</p>
<p>Charlesetta Robinson Assistant Principal Montgomery Public Schools C: 334.315.6474; O: 334.260.1000 Email: crobenson945@gmail.com</p>	<p>Mike Rowell Administrator ALFA Insurance Company O: 334.613.4197 Email: mrowell@alfains.com</p>



**“There are those who look at things the way they are, and ask why...
I dream of things that never were, and ask why not?”**

Robert Kennedy



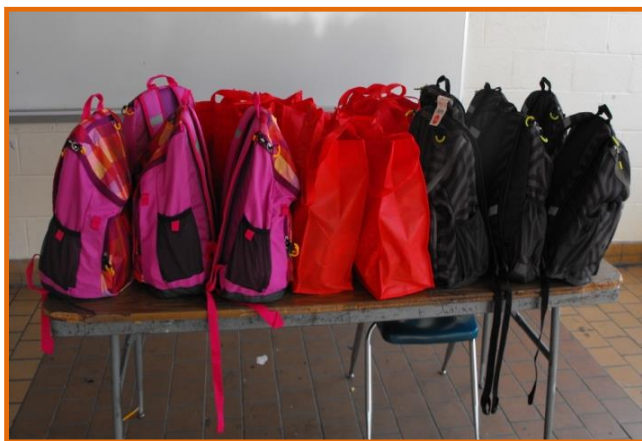
**The Backpack Initiative = *FOODforKIDS-MONTGOMERY:*
*The Process of Getting Nutritional Food to Montgomery Area School Children***

Subsequent to a meeting to discuss ideas for the project, the team was informed that there were over 600 homeless children in Montgomery County Schools. As a result, it was suggested that the Education Team meet with Ms. Debra Whitfield, Title 1 Administrator, Montgomery County Public Schools. This occurred early in the development of the project in September 2012. It was during this meeting with Ms. Whitfield that the idea of the backpack program was selected.



The idea of using backpacks was not an original idea to the Education Team's selection of the concept, but it was unique to Montgomery County. Ms. Whitfield then provided us with information regarding who to contact and how we might begin to identify homeless children in Montgomery Public Schools.

The goal was to provide backpacks filled with wholesome, non-perishable, and perishable food items for students during periods when they would not be at their respective schools. The underlying goal was to support the nutritional needs of students so that they might be better prepared to learn when returning to school after weekends and holidays. Research and reports suggest that hunger is a detractor of student learning outcomes. As a result, the *BackPack Initiative* was designed to counter this learning detriment for homeless and at-risk students.



As can be seen in Figure 1, the initial and planned three main components of the Education Team’s project consisted of a web site, a series of community service projects, and the *BackPack Initiative*. The backpack initiative required funding, and within a short time, the project was fully funded for the year, 2012-2013. In fact, due to the low prices offered by the Montgomery Area Food Bank (MAFB), current donations for the project have easily supported the project for the life of Class XXIX, and a limited time beyond the present class.

We met with the Montgomery Area Food Bank’s Executive Director, Mr. E. Parke Hinman, in September, 2012. Subsequently, members of the Education Team and community volunteers attended training at the MAFB, which was a requirement to shop at the warehouse. Now with sufficient funds, and armed with knowledge, regular shopping ensued. Shopping at the MAFB is a humbling experience. It becomes clear very quickly that—while the shopping activity itself is not overly taxing—it has its moments—what is at the heart of the MAFB carts filled with food, are the homeless kids that the carts of food will feed in times they most need the nutrition.

After shopping at the MAFB warehouse, the food items are transported to the individual schools participating in the program. Volunteers, normally on Thursday afternoons or Friday mornings, sort food items and prepare backpacks for distribution to the children.

Distribution usually occurs by asking the children to come to a room that enables them to receive the backpacks in privacy outside the confines of the regular classroom. The children take the backpacks home for the weekend or the holidays and return them the next time they will be attending classes.



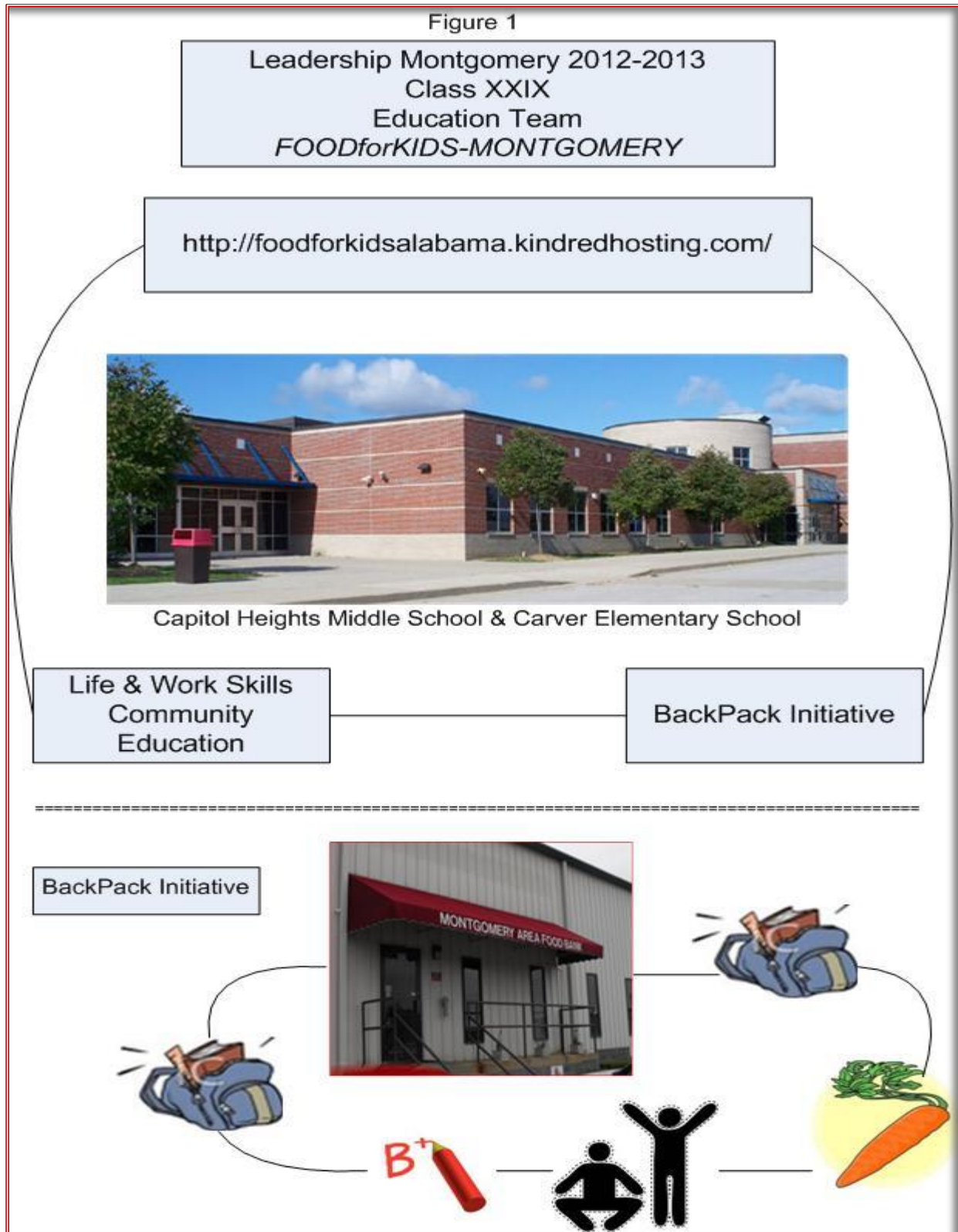
Capitol Heights Middle School Backpack Distribution Process

The initial participants were students from Capital Heights Middle School. We met with Principal Bobby Abrams² to discuss the backpack program at his school. He gave us assurances of his total support and this meeting launched the first school in the *FOODforKIDS-MONTGOMERY* program, with backpack distributions following soon thereafter.

The web site and the training sessions were under development, as well, but due to logistics of training partners and the time needed for the project, those two items were tabled for future development. These supplemental components would add value to the backpack process and in both direct and indirect ways impact the success of the students in the program.



² NFL: Giants (Super Bowl XXV), Browns, Cowboys (Super Bowls XXVII, XXVIII), Vikings, and Patriots



Project Proposal

LEADERSHIP MONTGOMERY CLASS XXIX TEAM PROJECT REPORT FORM

PROJECT TITLE: *FOODforKIDS-MONTGOMERY*

TEAM CAPTAIN: Bob Lane

EMAIL: robertblane@msn.com

TEAM MEMBERS (Education Team): Allen Newton, Charlesetta Robinson, Brett Hall, Mike Rowell, Kenley Obas, Ken Scott

THEMATIC AREA; Education

PROJECT DESCRIPTION: The primary objective of *FOODforKIDS-MONTGOMERY* is to address the issue of weekend food for homeless children when the meals they receive on schooldays are not available. This is a pilot project that will involve up to two hundred homeless children in Montgomery schools. **OUR VISION:** that this pilot will demonstrate that children who do not come to school hungry on Monday mornings will improve their test scores and realize multiple benefits in self-esteem and behavior. Furthermore, we intend that success this year will lead to implementation in subsequent years of a similar program throughout the school system.

We estimate that \$10,000 will be required to fund this project for six months. It will work like this: the team will acquire appropriate foodstuffs for a kid-friendly weekend menu that will consist of non-perishable breakfast, lunch, and dinner items as well as snacks. Foodstuffs will be stored in a secure room at participating schools. On Thursdays, school parent volunteers will place food items, three to five pounds per child, in a backpack (or one-gallon Ziploc bag, depending on the availability of funds.) Teachers will distribute the packets of food discreetly on Friday afternoons.

In addition to the backpacking segment, this program will offer a website sponsored jointly by Alabama State University (Kenley Obas), and Trenholm State (Ken Scott.) This website will be designed for workers in the homeless/at risk children and families field, and for others involved in services to this demographic. A third initiative that has been put on hold for the moment due to staffing cuts at Trenholm, is a series of workshops that was to be offered under the auspices of the college's Division of Continuing Education (Ms. Arlinda Knight.) These workshops were to have consisted of basic information for parents or guardians that addressed the needs of homeless and at-risk families. If, before the year is out, we are able to find a substitute teaching source, this part of the program will go forward.

GOALS:

1. Improve academic performance.
2. Reduce hunger.
3. Disseminate useful information.
4. Improve hygiene, job skills, nutrition, and general health.
5. Develop a model pilot program for possible replication throughout the school system.

COMMUNITY AGENCIES INVOLVMENT

We have visited with Montgomery Public Schools administrators and principals. We will raise money for backpacks and food from a variety of sources including, but not limited to: Walmart, Publix, Servis Bank, Hampstead Foundation, Alfa, Hyundai, CC Calhoun Charitable Foundation, Frazer Methodist Church, St. James Methodist Church, and True Divine Church.

POTENTIAL PROBLEMS

1. Sufficient funds not realized
2. Kids who do not receive food feel bad
3. Kids receiving food feel stigmatized

SOLUTIONS

- Scale back program. Results still valuable
- Improve discretion of distribution
- Improve distribution method

(Schools/agencies involved are receptive to working on these and other issues that arise)

DETERMINATION OF RESOURCES AND DIVISION OF RESPONSIBILITIES

TASK	COMMITTEE MEMBER(S)	TIMELINE
Contact MPS & individual schools	Lane, Robinson, Scott, Newton	Sept-Oct
Raise funds	Team	Oct-Nov-Dec
Establish base of operations	Lane, Robinson	Oct-Nov
Begin Backpack distribution	Robinson, Lane, Scott, Newton	Thanksgiving week
Launch Website, video, book	Obas, Scott	December
Plan Workshops	Scott, Robinson, Newton, Lane	February
Present Workshops	Scott, Newton, Robinson, Hall, Lane	March
Evaluate	Team	April

PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

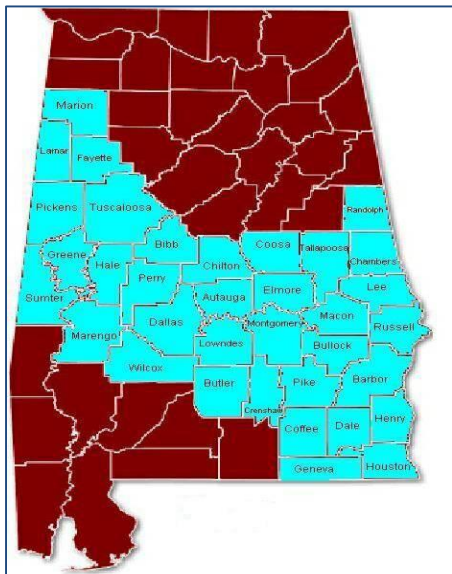
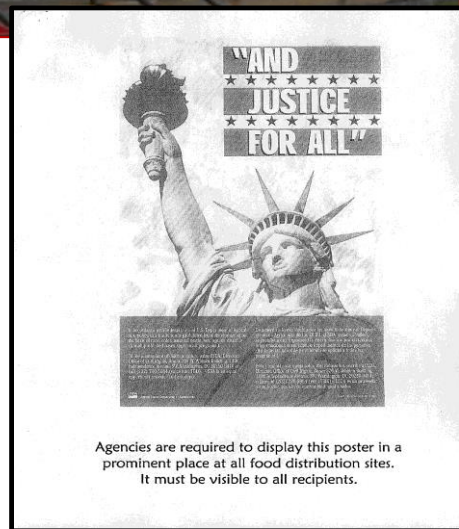
Permission to execute will be obtained from MPS. Principals will be given forms to obtain parents' consent for child participation. The project will use school parent volunteers whenever possible for food packet preparation. Teachers will distribute on Friday afternoons. Team members will maintain close contact with each school for problem-solving. The website will undergo continuing improvement and expansion throughout the school year. Workshops will be presented if resources can be established in time.



The Montgomery Area Food Bank, or the MAFB, is the primary source of low-cost food in Montgomery County. The backpack process could not have been established and maintained without the resources of this excellent institution of support to homeless individuals, including homeless and hungry students in Montgomery Public Schools.



Since 1986, The Montgomery Area Food Bank fights hunger and poverty in South Central Alabama by distributing food and other donated products to over 800 non-profit member agencies serving 35 counties. A map of the counties we provide service is indicated below (East Alabama Food Bank serves Macon and Tallapoosa).



Through this food network, our partnering charity organizations provide free food to low income residents by distributing bags of groceries or on-site feeding (soup kitchen) programs.

The Food Bank system, which has been in place for more than 25 years, takes food that otherwise would have gone to waste and gets it out to people who are unable to provide adequate food for themselves and their families. Through our Food Bank and its' 4 PDOs, we distribute roughly 19 million pounds of food annually.

Sponsors

