

### ***Participating students will take home food over the weekends throughout the school year***

Orlando, Fla. (January 13, 2023) – During the recent celebration of its 10<sup>th</sup> year since opening doors in Orlando, Nemours Children’s Hospital, Florida announced that it has enhanced its partnership with Blessings in a Backpack, a local nonprofit organization committed to reducing the food gap for school-aged children in Central Florida.

The partnership between Nemours Children’s Hospital, Florida and Blessings in a Backpack will ensure students enrolled in the free-lunch program will have nutritious foods on the weekends and during holiday breaks. Nemours Children’s has committed to providing food to eligible students at Boggy Creek Elementary in Osceola County, Winegard Elementary in Orange County and Layer Elementary in Seminole County through the end of the school year.

Volunteers from Nemours spent the morning at Boggy Creek Elementary packing up food for children to take home during the long Martin Luther King Jr. holiday weekend.

This initiative is one example of how Nemours Children’s Health goes “Well Beyond Medicine” and expanding initiatives outside the hospital walls to improve health and address disparities in the communities Nemours serves.

“Nemours Children’s Health is proud to expand our partnership with Blessings in a Backpack to be able to address a critical need for students in our area,” said Martha McGill, Senior Vice President and Chief Administrative Officer, Nemours Children’s Hospital, Florida. “Food insecurity is one of the most important factors that can impact a child’s health. We hope by expanding our partnership with Blessings in a Backpack that more children will have better opportunities to enhance their health.”

There are 9 million children experiencing food insecurity in the United States, according to Blessings in a Backpack, or one in eight children struggling with access to food. Between Orange, Osceola and Seminole County alone, approximately about 72 percent of students are part of the free and reduced-price meal program at school.

Since its start, Blessings in a Backpack has provided 23.5 million hunger-free weekends to more than 838,600 children nationwide.

“It’s estimated that one in every five children in Central Florida leaves school on a Friday afternoon and doesn’t have food again until they return to school on Monday morning, so we fill that 65-hour weekend meal gap to make sure that kids have the nutrition that they need so that they can show up to school Monday morning nourished and ready to learn,” said Sarah Carlson, Managing Director, Blessings in a Backpack.

“As educators, we know very well that kids cannot learn if their tummies are not full,” said Yara Tavaréz de la Fuentes, principal, Boggy Creek Elementary. “They’re not going to be in the mind space to be able to pay attention to fractions and literature, so it’s important to me that once we take care of those logistical things, we can get to work.”

#### **About Nemours Children’s Health**

Nemours Children’s Health is one of the nation’s largest multistate pediatric health systems, which includes two free-standing children’s hospitals and a network of more than 70 primary and specialty care practices. Nemours Children’s seeks to transform the health of children by adopting a holistic health model that utilizes innovative, safe, and high-quality care, while also caring for the health of the whole child beyond medicine. Nemours Children’s also powers the world’s most-visited website for information on the health of children and teens, Nemours KidsHealth.org.

The Nemours Foundation, established through the legacy and philanthropy of Alfred I. duPont, provides pediatric clinical care, research, education, advocacy, and prevention programs to the children, families and communities it serves. For more information, visit [Nemours.org](https://nemours.org).

#### **About Blessings in a Backpack**

Blessings in a Backpack mobilizes communities, individuals, and resources to provide food on the weekends for elementary school children who might otherwise go hungry. Blessings in a Backpack is the only national organization solely dedicated to preventing childhood hunger on the weekends, striving to ensure children

don't go hungry by empowering individuals and communities to take action. Locally, Blessings helps to feed more than 5,400 children in 37 schools each weekend in Orange, Seminole and Osceola counties.

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