



## »»» PACKING WITH PURPOSE

### A SMALL ACT, BIG IMPACT

Each week during the school year, dozens of Hutto ISD students receive a small bag of food that helps bridge the weekend gap. Packed with shelf-stable staples and distributed through the District's Licensed Mental Health Professionals, these bags offer something more than just nourishment. They offer consistency and care.

**The Weekend Lunch Box program,** coordinated by Hutto ISD's Licensed Mental Health Professional team in partnership with Hutto Discovery United Methodist Church, provides food support to families in need across the District. In its first year under the new partnership, the program served 50 students weekly. For the 2025-2026 school year, the number will increase to 75.

That expansion is welcome news, but the need is still far greater. Last year, more than 275 students in Hutto ISD qualified for assistance through the federal McKinney-Vento program, which supports students experiencing housing insecurity.

"There is still a gap," said Wendell Teltow, who helps lead the initiative on behalf of the church. "We know we can't solve everything, but we can do something. And that something matters."

Each bag contains about five dollars' worth of food: items like macaroni and cheese, oatmeal, cereal, tuna, green beans, ramen, and fruit cups. On extended weekends or holiday breaks, additional items are added to help students get through the extra days away from school meals.

Volunteers from Hutto Discovery UMC gather every other week to pack the bags. They often do so alongside other ongoing church activities like a retirees' luncheon or a community knitting group, making the process both efficient and collaborative. Some volunteers have no formal affiliation with the church but join after hearing about the program from friends or neighbors.

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—Wendell Teltow,  
Hutto Discovery United Methodist Church



“It’s a hands-on way to make a difference,” said Teltow. “And packing the bags gives people a chance to connect with each other, too.”

The food is delivered to a central campus where Hutto ISD Licensed Mental Health Professionals organize distribution to other schools. School Counselors and LMHPs work thoughtfully to ensure student privacy is protected at every step.

Feedback from families has been overwhelmingly positive. While a few have suggested including healthier or more varied options, the consistent support has been deeply appreciated.

“There’s a dignity in simply being remembered,” said Jeanette Molina, LMSW. “These families are facing challenges, and even a small gesture like this can make a meaningful difference.”

With the increase to 75 students this fall, program leaders are actively seeking community support.

“Our biggest need is help covering the cost of the food,” said Teltow. “We’re in early talks with area partners, and we’re inviting other local businesses, civic groups, and individuals to step in as well.”

Packing help is also welcome. Volunteers are typically needed every other week, and packing sessions often align with existing events at the church. Supporters can also consider sponsoring a month of bags or donating specific food items.

Teltow, who spent more than three decades working in child welfare, is passionate about the importance of this work. He recalls the joy his own grandchildren experienced after receiving food bags at a summer camp, not because they needed them, but because it made them feel special.

“That memory stuck with me,” he said. “It reminded me that something as small as a bag of mac and cheese can light up a child’s day.”

“The need is real, but so is the heart of this community,” said Teltow. “When we work together, we can make sure no student goes hungry over the weekend.”

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*Those interested in supporting the Weekend Lunch Box program can contact Hutto Discovery United Methodist Church at 512-846-1707 or reach out to Hutto ISD’s Student Services Division by calling 737-3274-7264, or email [jeanette.molina@huttoisd.net](mailto:jeanette.molina@huttoisd.net) for more information.*