

# Backpack Program Puts Food on Children's Tables

By Lori Froehlich

Klickitat PUD employees recently participated in the Backpacks for Kids program.

October was Hunger Awareness Month. At KPUD's monthly safety meeting, Brian and Lynn Wanless attended and shared information about Backpacks for Kids with employees.

The program's goal is to meet the needs of hungry children by providing them with nutritious and easy-to-prepare food to take home on weekends and school vacations, when other food resources might not be available.

Included in the program are Goldendale Primary School, Goldendale Head Start, Dallesport Head Start, Wishram schools, White Salmon primary and middle schools, Klickitat Primary School, Klickitat Head Start and Lyle schools.

To be eligible for the program, students have to qualify through their school's free and reduced lunch program.

A recent report in The Goldendale Sentinel noted fundraising is a critical part of Backpacks for Kids. Running the program costs about \$40,000 for the duration of its 40-week process, or about \$120 per student a year. Administrative duties, food purchasing, food bag assembly and distribution are done with in-kind or volunteer hours.

Communities with school districts served by the program have poverty rates between 22 percent and 28 percent, with free and reduced lunch rates between 57 percent and 89 percent, the Sentinel reported.

Program participants are selected by school staff based on their food needs during school closures. Participants are 41 percent ages 1 to 5; 42 percent grades K-six; and 17 percent grades seven to 12, the Sentinel reported.

KPUD collected more than \$600 in employee donations. That is roughly two-thirds of PUD employees donating \$10 each, an amount that will allow KPUD to feed five children for the rest of the program year.

The program serves 220 students in Klickitat County and expects to serve 300 to 350 by December. As the numbers of students served increases, the cost of the program will rise.

Please join KPUD in contributing to this important program to fight hunger and help a child in your community.

A collection jar will be located at KPUD offices in Goldendale and White Salmon. You also can mail your donation in a **separate check** with your monthly electric bill payment. ■