



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Weekend food bags to go home with Amistad Elementary students through Attendance Matters® mentoring program

Kennewick, WA — April 17, 2026— United Way of Benton & Franklin Counties has launched a pilot program at Amistad Elementary aimed at improving student attendance and supporting family well-being. Through UWBFCA Attendance Matters® mentoring program, weekend food bags will go home with Amistad students on Friday (4/17/2026). These bags will provide weekend food support to students, addressing food insecurity as a key barrier to consistent school attendance.

Students who have their basic needs met are more likely to attend school regularly, stay engaged in the classroom, and reach their full potential. However, many families face challenges that impact attendance. At Amistad Elementary, nearly 90% of families are low-income, and almost one in three students were chronically absent during the last school year. Research consistently shows that students experiencing food insecurity are at greater risk of missing school.

To address this need, funding from LabCorp will support the distribution of weekend food bags to 30 students. The program will utilize 2nd Harvest's Bite 2 Go initiative, which provides kid-friendly, ready-to-eat meals and snacks to ensure children have reliable access to food over the weekend.

"This pilot program reflects our commitment to addressing the root causes of absenteeism," said Asta Bonheyo, Community Impact Director at United Way of Benton & Franklin Counties. "By ensuring students have access to food over the weekend, we are removing a critical barrier and helping them show up ready to learn."

The program is guided by insights from Amistad's administrative staff and its Attendance Matters® Mentor, ensuring it is tailored to the specific needs of students and families. The Attendance Matters® Mentor will oversee implementation, working closely with school counselors and partner organizations such as Communities in Schools to identify students who would benefit most.

Our Mentor at Amistad will also play a key role in family outreach and student engagement—informing families about the program, conducting regular check-ins with participating students, and reinforcing the importance of daily attendance while tracking attendance data.

The Attendance Matters® Weekend Food Bag pilot program represents a collaborative, community-driven approach to improving attendance and supporting student success—one meal, and one school day, at a time.

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