

# OVERCOMING SPECIAL CHALLENGES TO GET FOOD TO RURAL WA KIDS

Reprinted from: Eric Tegethoff Washington News Service January 25, 2021



SEATTLE -- Hunger is on the rise across the country because of the pandemic, and it can be especially hard to get food to children living in rural areas.

In Washington state, hunger is up at least 5% in every county.

The nonprofit Save the Children has helped distribute 600,000 meals to kids in rural parts of the state.

Amee Barlet, Washington state deputy director of programs for the group, said Save the Children also helped the Lake Quinault School District, a large district on the Olympic peninsula, purchase a van and truck to get to hard-to-reach families.

"They have families that live down logging roads and they're able to deliver food directly to those families' doorsteps," Barlet explained. "Those families probably otherwise would not be able to receive the meals. They might not be able to get to the school."

Barlet noted transportation is a barrier for many families. Save the Children has provided \$250,000 to nutrition programs in the state, assisting its partners and school districts.

Tamara Sandberg, U.S. advisor for food security and nutrition for the group, said widespread school closures have affected many children, but largely the 30 million who rely on free or reduced-priced meals.

She added hunger due to COVID-19 is worse and more pervasive in rural America.

"We're very concerned," Sandberg stated. "This is a generation that is missing out on the nourishment that they need to grow and thrive. Kids cannot be hungry for knowledge when they're hungry for food."

Sandberg suggested one of the most promising models for delivering meals is the Farmers to Families Food Box Program, in which the U.S. Department of Agriculture pays for food which is distributed directly to people.

Save the Children has distributed about 200,000 boxes through the program.

***\*Save the Children Long Island Council gave significant support to Washington State Programs in 2019 and 2020 thanks to our many donors!***