

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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BACKPACKS FOR KIDS PROGRAM HOSTS FUNDRAISER

Weekend food project for children gets support from Papa's Polar Patch

BISMARCK, ND – Recent snow, warmer temperatures and a community program in need will come together this weekend at Papa's Polar Patch. The area's Backpacks for Kids Program, coordinated through the Region VII Community Action Agency in Bismarck, hopes to raise \$1,000 from Feb. 15-18, enough funding to provide 140 backpacks filled with food for homeless children in the Bismarck Public School system.

"Each Friday, we provide backpacks full of food for children ages 4 -17 to take home for the weekend," says Mandy Reinhart, director of the Backpacks for Kids Program. "On average, it costs the Community Action Agency about \$1,000 a week to fill 140 backpacks for these children, and often their entire family. We hope to add another 30 backpacks reaching children in three or four more schools, and this fundraiser at Papa's Polar Patch will get us off to a great start."

The Region VII Community Action Agency developed the Backpacks for Kids program in December 2006, which is based on a similar program in Kansas. At the beginning of the 2006-2007 academic year, Bismarck Public Schools identified 300 students as homeless. The purpose of the backpacks program is to provide kid-friendly food items to these children for the weekend when they are not receiving meals at school.

The Backpacks for Kids fundraiser will be held Friday, Feb. 15 – Monday, Feb. 18, from 12-5 p.m. daily at Papa's Polar Patch. The cost is \$2 per person. The Polar Patch will donate 25 percent of the proceeds from this weekend's event to the Backpacks for Kids Program.

"Papa's has always been about supporting families, education and fun," says Dave Pearce, founder and one of the six family members who own and operate Papa's Pumpkin Patch and Papa's Polar Patch. "Our goal is to offer families a fun and safe place to 'Celebrate the Season' and support identified needs in our community."

Currently, the Community Action Agency delivers 140 backpacks to 18 Bismarck schools. Food items in the backpacks include bread, peanut butter, jelly, fruit and cereal bars, fruit and pudding cups, crackers, individual dinners and box cereals. The average cost range per backpack is \$6-\$8. "It is amazing how little it takes to provide food for a

child for one weekend, and still the need is great,” Reinhart says. “Even with what we are doing, there are still children going home on Fridays with no idea what they will eat until they return to school Monday morning.”

Pearce says he hopes other organizations in the community will consider hosting a fundraiser for the Backpacks for Kids Program. “Think about it, if we raise \$1,000 this weekend, we can fill 150 backpacks and feed children (and probably others in their families) next weekend. What a tremendous and almost immediate impact we can make. My mom always says, “To those whom much has been given, much is expected.””

Papa’s Polar Patch opened for its first season between Christmas and New Year’s in 2007 and collected nearly \$700 in needed food pantry items. The Polar Patch is a “sister” event to Papa’s Pumpkin Patch and is held in the same location 1.5 miles north of Bismarck off of River Road.

Visitors of all ages will discover the infamous Bale Maze and Castle, old-fashioned sled rides, horse-drawn sleigh rides, Slide Mountain, the Polar Pond ice-skating rink, Papa’sville and the Snow Caves await their enjoyment. Hot beverages, warm chocolate chip cookies, and Papa Murphy’s Pizza will be available in the Polar Patch warming house.

For more information about the Backpacks for Kids Program call Reinhart at 701-258-2240. For more information about the Backpacks fundraiser at Papa’s Polar Patch this weekend, visit www.papaspolarpatch.com or call 701-222-1521.

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