

Toyota and Philabundance Help Alleviate Childhood Hunger in Philadelphia

February 02, 2021



PHILADELPHIA (Feb. 2, 2021) — Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, one in five people in Philadelphia were food-insecure. This number, which was already higher than the national average, has been heightened throughout the past year – and local children are among the most critical in-need, missing vital access to free food programs through school due to the pandemic’s impact. Philadelphia’s child food insecurity rate in 2020 is projected at over 32 percent, and the need to support the local childhood community has never been more important.

[Philabundance](#) (a hunger relief organization serving Greater Philadelphia and a member of [Feeding America](#)) is at the forefront of the fight against childhood food insecurity and needs assistance from the community, now more than ever. “For food banks across the country, much of the past year has been focused on adapting to meet the 60 percent increase in need that we’ve seen because of COVID,” explained Philabundance CEO Loree Jones. “With children remote learning due to the pandemic, many don’t have access to the school meals they depended on to get through the day. This made our Backpack Program aimed at feeding children more important than ever.”

Philabundance’s Backpack Program delivers much-needed free food for kids, providing three to five pounds of

shelf-stable food (equating to 24 meals), per backpack. Altogether, this monthly food distribution provides over 30,000 kids and their families with access to nutritious food each month. And, every one of the more than 7,000 BackPacks Philabundance distributes each month also provides suggested recipes to further assist these families.

Prior to COVID-19, Philabundance's Backpack Program was facilitated through local schools, with children looking forward to the array of food and snacks they received monthly. Due to COVID-19 and shifting to remote learning, Philabundance pivoted the program to serve students through its agency network of food pantries, community centers and more. The 24 sites that will distribute the BackPacks are located in zip codes with some of the highest rates of food insecurity in Greater Philadelphia.

To help Philabundance provide Philadelphia children and their families with these nutritious meals, [Toyota](#), its local Toyota Dealers and many business partners across Greater Philadelphia have come together under a new donation drive and media campaign, branded *Lil' Abundance*, that will both raise awareness for children's food insecurity and fund two-months-worth of free food to kids and their families through Philabundance's Backpack Program.

"Every year, Toyota and the Dealers are deeply humbled by the chance to join with our local business partners to help Philabundance fight hunger here in the Delaware Valley. There are a lot of things people should be, and 'hungry' is just not one of them," said Paul Muller, president of the Tri-State Toyota Dealers Association (comprised of 25 dealerships in Pennsylvania, New Jersey and Delaware). "This year, especially, the need was clear to help Philabundance with their programs to support local children and their families facing hunger during unconscionable – and in many ways, unprecedented – challenges. Toyota and about two dozen of our local business partners came together to create and launch the first-ever Lil' Abundance campaign to 'help feed lil' mouths.'"

Through the Lil' Abundance campaign, Toyota, the Tri-State Toyota Dealers and local business partners have come together to enable Philabundance with the ability to provide meals to children and their families – all distributed safely and socially-distanced, given the current circumstances stemming from COVID-19. In total, Toyota and its partners' Lil' Abundance campaign efforts will provide Philabundance with two full months of Backpack Program funding, providing free food for kids and more than 345,000 meals.

"Toyota and our local Dealers have always made it our mission to give back to the community," said Ben Pyle, general manager of Toyota's Central Atlantic Region, which includes Pennsylvania and Delaware. "Working with Philabundance again this year gives us the chance to support local families in an incredibly impactful way during such a challenging time. We're happy to support this important cause and bring relief to our neighbors in need."

Similar to the annual "Toyota Tundra Food Drives," the Tri-State Toyota Dealers Association, along with both Toyota Motor North America and Toyota Financial Services, joined forces with more than 20 of the Dealers' local business partners (including television/cable outlets, radio stations, local print and outdoor companies, and Philadelphia's professional sports organizations) to collectively create and contribute to the Lil' Abundance campaign in support of the important ongoing food distributions Philabundance's Backpack Program provides to children and their families.

“As the local Toyota Dealers living and working in our communities, we’ve been blown away by the support from our media and professional sports partners to come together and help our friends at Philabundance truly make a difference in people’s lives,” said Paul Muller. “The past year has served as a stark reminder of the food insecurity within our communities, and it’s more important than ever that we work together to put an end to childhood hunger in Philadelphia and continue to find meaningful opportunities to give back to those who need it most right now.”

“We’re extremely proud of the effort and the incredible impact Lil’ Abundance will have. We are grateful for our longstanding partnership with Philabundance, which year after year has given Toyota and our Dealers such meaningful opportunities to make a positive difference within local communities,” added Briana Nelson, general manager of Toyota’s New York Region, which includes southern New Jersey. “It’s been an honor to come together again this year on Lil’ Abundance to fight hunger and provide healthy and nutritious meals to children and families in-need across our region, especially *now* when this support needed more than ever.”

The Lil’ Abundance campaign efforts have enabled Philabundance’s BackPack Program efforts in January-February 2021. However, there remains another 10 months of the calendar year when Philabundance needs support from businesses and individuals across Greater Philadelphia’s communities to help food insecure children and their families.

“Instead of just canceling the annual *Haul Away Hunger* event, Toyota and their partners pivoted with us to help serve one of our most vulnerable populations: children. No child should have to wonder where their next meal is coming from, and thanks to Toyota and its partners, thousands of kids across Philadelphia won’t have to,” added Loree Jones. “We hope other individuals and organizations can be inspired to help us on our mission to end childhood hunger, for good.”

To find out how you can help aid hunger relief through Lil’ Abundance and beyond, text **DONATEFOOD** to **44321** or visit www.philabundance.org. Join the conversation on social media with the hashtags #beethunger and #ToyotaLilAbundance, and tag [@toyotausa](https://www.instagram.com/toyotausa) and [@philabundance](https://www.instagram.com/philabundance) on Instagram. For those seeking food assistance immediately, please call 1-800-5-HUNGRY or visit Philabundance’s website: www.philabundance.org/find-food.