



Media Advisory www.spps.org

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Pilot program gives families a new reason to check their child's backpack – healthy food!

For 30 Webster Magnet Elementary School families the grocery store is as close as their child's backpack. Through a pilot program operated in partnership with Whole Foods Market, the City of Saint Paul, and Saint Paul Public Schools, 30 families will receive a variety of food – sent home in their child's backpack. Families started enjoying grocery items through this service on April 24.

Whole Foods Market in Saint Paul has pledged to provide the start up items for the school's pantry. Customers can help support the program by purchasing designated items at the Saint Paul Whole Foods store (located near the intersection of Grand and Fairview) and depositing them in the store's donation bin. Items consist of a variety of healthy, easy-to-prepare items including cereal, pasta, soup, fruit and vegetables. When the pilot program ends in six weeks it will be evaluated to determine if it can continue based on customer donations alone.

"We are grateful for the healthy boost this program will give our students and their families and it will be a long-term learning event for Webster," said Principal Lori Simon. "Our students will maintain and manage the pantry as part of our school's commitment to service learning."

"One of our core values at Whole Foods Market is caring about our communities," said Jen Finger, Marketing and Community Relations Specialist for Whole Foods Market Saint Paul. "After learning how many families with school children are struggling to provide well balanced meals, and how many children rely on school meals for most of their nutrition, we felt compelled to find a way to help provide healthy, nutritious food outside the school setting."

The food-to-backpack project was initiated by the Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy, a Minneapolis-based non-profit that supports sustainable food systems and family farmers in Minnesota and around the world. Webster Magnet Elementary School was selected to participate in this program because of its service learning focus and because the school serves many families that are eligible for free or reduced-price lunch. Families served by this program remain anonymous to food donors and to students operating the school pantry. Service Learning is a teaching and learning strategy that integrates meaningful community service with instruction and learning experience.

About Whole Foods Market®

Founded in 1980 in Austin, Texas, Whole Foods Market (www.wholefoodsmarket.com), a leader in the natural and organic foods industry and America's first national certified organic grocer. The Whole Foods Market motto, "Whole Foods, Whole People, Whole Planet"™ captures the company's mission to find success in customer satisfaction and wellness, employee excellence and happiness, enhanced shareholder value, community support and environmental

improvement. In fiscal year 2008, the company had sales of \$8 billion and currently has more than 275 stores in the United States, Canada, and the United Kingdom.

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