

Don't Miss a Day Boxed Food

In Fall 2018, the Rutgers University Police Department (RUPD) in partnership with Rutgers University-Newark Office of University and Community Partnerships (OUCP) spearheaded a community impact project addressing food insecurity and academic performance. The Don't Miss a Day Box Food Drive was birthed through a conversation surrounding the implications of child hunger and its impact on academic achievement and social development. The Fall 2018 drive yielded over 500 meals packed in 180 boxes distributed to three Newark elementary/ middle schools within a six-week period. The Don't Miss a Day Box Food Drive challenges the Rutgers University community to pack three non-perishable meals in a shoebox-sized box for a child to easily carry home ensuring at least one day without hunger. Each box is decorated individually to ensure the item is attractive to students upon receipt thereby minimizing the stigma of hunger and contains a note of encouragement for each student recipient. Collective feedback from the fall 2018 drive indicates each school requires a larger donation to impact identified students as donations were distributed within a less than a week. The Spring 2019 drive occurred between March 1, 2019 to April 19, 2019.

To capture the results in a high-level:

A total of 1,940 meals were collected and that number is still growing as more boxes and meals are still coming in. 1,940 meals represents a 388% increase from the fall and 215% to target of 900 meals. We received so many meals that the boxes contained 4 meals instead of 3. To date 1,600 meals were distributed to the three targeted schools and the remaining 340 meals will be distributed to other identified school(s) in need in Newark. The schools have also enrolled in the Central NJ Food Bank Family Pack Program as a sustainable solution for the 2019-2020 school year.

The prize is a \$1,000 dollar cash prize which is going to be re-donated to support this program again this coming fall semester.