

Power Packs



COCALICO AFFILIATE
Empowering families...feeding children

Power Packs Project recognizes the vital role that nutrition plays in children's ability to learn in school. According to the Center on Hunger and Poverty, "Hungry children have a hard time learning in school, have short attention spans, and suffer more absence due to illness." Power Packs Project does not solve this problem with highly processed, highly sugared, and expensive pre-packaged food. Instead, each week a recipe for a low-cost meal and the ingredients to make it are provided in addition to staples like peanut butter and cereal. Empowering the participating families to better use their food dollars and assure their children are well-fed and ready to learn at school are the goals of the program. Power Packs' unique approach to providing a nutritious weekend meal and food preparation skills aims to teach families how to better stretch their food dollars. Power Packs provide low-cost recipes and ingredients for our participants to cook a meal for under \$5.

In 2013, Rod Redcay, executive director for REAL Youth Ministry along with Pastor Sandra Gideon of St. Paul's Lutheran Church in Adamstown worked with Joan Espenshade to obtain the necessary approvals from the REAL Youth Ministry Board of Directors and Cocalico School District. Donna Smith signed on as Operations Manager for the Cocalico Affiliate.

The Program launched in the 2013-2014 school year with the Denver Elementary School chosen as the pilot school. Trinity United Methodist Church on Main Street in Denver graciously provided us with storage space and allowed us to make distributions from their building. We became a Partner Agency with the Central Pennsylvania Food Bank in Harrisburg to obtain the majority of our food. Our program's first distribution was Thursday, October 3, 2013. We held weekly distributions (except for Thanksgiving and Christmas) until the end of May. At the end of the year, we were serving 18 families weekly.

At the close of the year, we decided to open up participation to all 3 elementary schools. This required us to obtain another storage area, 2 more distribution sites and another freezer and a refrigerator to continue the delivery of eggs and milk. In order to expand our services, we joined the Community Action Program in Lancaster. They provided us with a refrigerator and a grant of \$1800 (placed in our Central PA Food Bank account). Free or inexpensive food is also available from CAP. At that time, Peace UCC agreed to be a storage and distribution site. Salem Evangelical in Reamstown signed on as another distribution site. Eventually progressed to all 5 schools in the district.

In October of 2020, REAL Life Community Services opened Warehouse916 to consolidate all of our food programs to one site and better maintain the quality of the food. With that, they were able to expand Power Packs to more families and even offer food programs for residents of the Cocalico School District that do not have children in school, such as the elderly and single adults.

Power Packs Project – Cocalico distributes food on Wednesdays between 3-5 pm at Warehouse916. Participants are sent an email on Fridays. Those that respond to that email before Monday at 3 are put on the participation list for the week and food is packaged for them. Families that respond affirmatively to the email but do not pick up their food two or more weeks in a row or four times total in a school year will be removed from the program. Families that do not respond to emails 2 or more weeks will also be removed from the program. They are welcome to re-enroll the following year. Applications are accepted year-round, beginning in August of each school year and continuing until May of the following year. All applications are online. If you cannot access our website, please call our offices and we will help you to complete the application over the phone. 717-336-7797