

Still going strong ...

Staff, volunteers ensure no student goes hungry

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GOSHEN COUNTY – It's been nearly a decade since Torrington Middle School (TMS) began a weekly distribution of non-perishable food to students, and thanks to district staff and volunteers, the Backpack Program – and recipients – are just as nourished as ever.

Every Wednesday at 5 p.m., with a few exceptions for holidays and inclement weather, volunteers gather at TMS to fill backpacks full of non-perishable food items. Students then take the backpacks home over the weekend to ensure they have enough food to sustain them until the next school day.

While the program originally served only TMS students, the backpacks are now distributed throughout Goshen County, according to District

takes approximately 30 minutes, depending on the number of volunteers. When winter weather hits, volunteers fill the backpacks during the day and school custodians deliver the foodstuffs to students.

"Right now, we're filling 320 backpacks (a week)," she said – the number recently dropped from 340. "It's not income-based. We provide breakfast, lunch, supper and a snack for the weekend. The food's ready to go, or almost ready to eat – sometimes you have parents who work on the weekend or you might have parents who don't cook – and this is a good way for kids to get their nutrition."

Last week's items consisted of canned stew, cornflakes and more. The program also receives donations from businesses and organizations in the community, including breakfast items from Pinnacle Bank, monetary gifts from St. Joseph's Children's Home



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ABOVE: Members of the Eastern Wyoming College mens' basketball team, including Alek Cosic, left, Janko Stojanovic, Trey Schroefel and Bruno Oliveira, help fill backpacks last week at Torrington Middle School.

BELOW: Volunteers gather in the pantry at Torrington Middle School last Wednesday to fill backpacks for the Goshen County Backpack Program.

