



News Release
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North Okanagan Starfish Program Marks 10 Years of Supporting Local Elementary Students

The North Okanagan Starfish Program—managed by the Kalamalka Starfish Society—is marking 10 years of helping local elementary students and their families access nutritious food on weekends. The program currently supports close to 240 children a week across 22 locations throughout the North Okanagan.

Food insecurity continues to affect families in our region, and weekends can be especially challenging. Each week, Starfish weekend food bags provide dependable, healthy meals so students can return to school ready to learn. “These bags don’t just fill stomachs—they lift spirits and help children return to class each Monday ready to learn, grow, and thrive,” says Mary Jackson, President of the Kalamalka Starfish Society.

“It takes a community to deliver this program,” says Darryl O’Brian, Vice-President of the Society. “We’re grateful for the ongoing support of Save-On-Foods Village Green, Keith Construction, Kalamalka Rotary, Wayside Press, School District 22, School District 83, and our 40-plus volunteers who sort food, pack bags, and ensure timely delivery.”

Over the last four school years, the program has delivered more than 23,000 food bags—providing more than 140,000 meals to elementary students and their families. “Weekends used to be stressful because we weren’t sure we could stretch groceries far enough,” shared one parent. “The Starfish bag means our child has balanced meals and can focus at school instead of worrying about food.”

To support the North Okanagan Starfish Program, community members can volunteer, donate funds, or host a fundraiser to help provide weekend food bags for food insecure elementary students. Learn more through the contact information below or by visiting the program’s website and Facebook page.

The Starfish Program was introduced in Vernon in spring 2016 by the Kalamalka Rotary Club as part of a province-wide initiative. Starting with a pilot of 20 packs and six schools, the program expanded to meet growing need—especially during the COVID-19 pandemic—and became a volunteer-led non-profit society in 2021. Each bag contains two breakfasts, two lunches, two dinners, vegetables, fruit, and snacks.

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