

# PRESS RELEASE



## West Middle School Receives Grant for Food Pantry

West Middle School has been notified that they have received an \$800 grant from the *Kickin' Childhood Hunger* organization to purchase fresh fruit weekly for the participants in their Food Pantry.

West Middle School counselor and director of the West Middle School Food Pantry Robert Morse reported, "The picture is of some of our Food Pantry helpers with the first of the fruit purchased with the 'Got Fruit?' grant funds from the *Kickin' Childhood Hunger* organization. West counselor Lynetta Rochelle came up with program name, 'Got Fruit?' that helped catch the grant committee's attention."

The girls pictured are members of Girl Scout Troop 173 of Cherokee Council, and they are one of the group of West Middle School students who help set up weekly food distributions. Mr. Kirk Hamlin is a special education teacher at West and regularly takes time from his planning period to help with weekly distributions. Ms. Jennifer Malloy is the Troop Leader for this group of Girl Scouts and she is a Title I Assistant at West. There are other groups of students who also help. Ms. Mandy Seward and Ms. Stacie Danks RISE team have regularly helped making up sacks for weekly distribution.

Mr. Morse explains, "Funds from the grant will be placed in the West Middle School Food Pantry activity account, and weekly purchases will be made from local sources of fresh fruit to be provided to served students. This will add a new dimension to our Food Pantry program as we do not have available long-term storage for fresh fruit for our served students. This will also assist the Food Pantry program by allowing the majority of our allocation from the Regional Food Bank to be concentrated on obtaining more entrée (protein based) choices for our students."

Students at West are identified by referrals from teachers, parents, other adults, and students as being in homes where family funds are short resulting in students not having enough to eat on a daily basis. Served students are usually participants in the free and reduced price meals program at school, although they are not limited to that group. Almost 69 percent of the students at West participate in the free and reduced price meals program. Recommendations are often received because a teacher, administrator, or other adult has noted that the student often returns to the lunch line looking for seconds or asks other students for part of their lunch. Potential participants

are interviewed in a non-threatening and private environment by the Food Pantry director where they participate in the decision about being served by the Food Pantry.

The West Middle School Food Pantry began serving students on September 15, 2017 and will continue to operate until at least May 18, 2018. The "Got Fruit?" Program addition to the Pantry will start with the first weekly distribution following receipt of funds and will continue weekly until May 18, 2018, or until funds are exhausted. Distributions for holiday breaks and spring break will include more food items to cover the days out of school.

West Middle School is working with a local Girl Scout troop as part of their service program to provide additional funds that could be used if other funds are exhausted. The Student Council will also be hosting a canned food drive with the goal of providing served students with supplemental food for the holiday season. Ponca City Public Schools also has a summer meal program through the month of June each year that serves all children, ages 18 and younger, at no cost to the student.

The mission of the Kickin' Childhood Hunger Organization is to engage in activities which work to eliminate childhood hunger in North Central Oklahoma and to work with organizations to accomplish that purpose. They donate 100% of their income directly to those approved by their board of directors, by an application process, to those who have a current childhood food program or have solid and viable plans on creating a program in their community or school. More information may be found on their website at [www.kickinchildhoodhunger.org](http://www.kickinchildhoodhunger.org).

*Pictured:*

*Front Row: Megan Malloy, Geneva Nelson, Samantha Dunnigan*

*Middle Row : Ava Webb, Katelyn Coats, Erika Pizzuto*

*Back Row: Kirk Hamlin, Jennifer Malloy, Mack Morse*

*Mary Ladd*

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