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Backpack Beginnings wins $25,000 grant

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Enterprise Staff Report

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GUILFORD COUNTY — A local organization that provides food to needy schoolchildren has won a $25,000 grant from the Jimmie Johnson Foundation, it was announced today.

BackPack Beginnings, a Greensboro-based nonprofit that serves schools throughout Guilford County, is one of five national recipients of a $25,000 Blue Bunny Helmet of Hope grant.

“We are thrilled to receive such a generous grant,” said Parker White, founder and executive director of Backpack Beginnings. “The grant will allow us to feed 167 children on the weekends for an entire school year. We hope the exposure from Blue Bunny Helmet of Hope will bring greater public awareness to childhood hunger.”

In addition to Backpack Beginnings, the other winners were: 9 Dots in Los Angeles; Big Brothers Big Sisters of Siouxland in Sioux City, Iowa; Carolina Raptor Center in Charlotte; and the Be Kind People Project in Phoenix.

Nonprofit organizations from around the country were nominated for grants. Ten semifinalists were chosen from the nominations, and the five winners were selected via public vote. Approximately 2.2 million votes were cast during the weeklong voting period.

“It was exciting to see this year’s Blue Bunny Helmet of Hope program unfold,” said Jimmie Johnson. “The semifinalist charities did an outstanding job of rallying their supporters to secure votes. It was a tough, hard-fought competition between 10 very deserving charities.”

In addition to a $25,000 grant, each of the five winners will receive a Blue Bunny ice cream party and special recognition on Johnson’s race helmet during the NASCAR Sprint Cup Series race on June 7 at Pocono (Pa.) Raceway.

Founded in 2010, Backpack Beginnings provides food-filled backpacks to approximately 1,400 Guilford County students a week — including more than 500 in High Point — to get them through the weekend. The organization also provides backpacks full of comfort items — such as stuffed animals, blankets and toys — to abused, homeless, refugee and foster children.

“Our food and comfort backpacks make all the difference for a child facing a long weekend filled with hunger or a day shattered by a traumatic experience,” says White. “With one in four children going hungry in North Carolina, this grant will help us reach more children.”