

## **Blessings in a Backpack, Cigna Foundation and Cigna Provide Weekend Meals to Mission Ridge Elementary School Students**

EL PASO, Texas, 20 October, 2016 - Two-hundred students at Mission Ridge Elementary will receive backpacks filled with healthy food each weekend throughout the school year, made possible through a Cigna Foundation grant to [Blessings in a Backpack](#). The national child hunger relief non-profit organization's three-year program will kick off tomorrow afternoon at an event sponsored by Cigna (NYSE: CI). All 830 Mission Ridge Elementary students will receive backpacks during the special event.

The program will open with remarks encouraging students to adopt healthy habits and to stay in school. Guests will be entertained by the Mission Ridge Elementary folklorico student performance group. Representatives from Mission Ridge, Socorro Independent School District (SISD), Cigna and Blessings in a Backpack will attend.

"Our backpacks give children the food they need during those times when free or reduced-priced school lunches are not available, such as on weekends," said Brooke Wiseman, chief executive officer for Blessings in a Backpack. "Partnering with the Cigna Foundation and Cigna brings national attention to the Blessings mission of feeding hungry children. Together, we can fight to end childhood hunger."

"The Cigna Foundation is committed to building a healthier and more secure future for every child," said David Figliuzzi, executive director of the Cigna Foundation. "When kids come to school hungry, it has a significant impact on their physical, mental and academic well-being. By working together with Blessings to reduce hunger, we can help students come to school each day healthy, engaged and ready to learn."

"More than 25 percent of El Paso County children go to bed hungry<sup>1</sup>, which is five points higher than the national average. That's unacceptable," said LaMonte Thomas, president for Cigna's North Texas market. "Cigna's work with Blessings in a Backpack is an important part of our commitment to building healthy communities in Texas."

Blessings in a Backpack is a results-oriented program designed to feed elementary school children whose families qualify for the federally funded National School Lunch Program and have little or no access to healthy food on the weekends. The program is supported nationally and locally by the Cigna Foundation and Cigna. Child wellness is a key focus of Cigna's corporate responsibility platform, Cigna Connects.

Funding for the food-filled backpacks was provided by the Cigna Foundation. The Cigna Foundation and Cigna have contributed \$450,000 to Blessings in a Backpack, including a \$100,000 [World of Difference grant](#) to expand the program in schools nationwide.

### **About Blessings in a Backpack**

Blessings in a Backpack, People Magazines Charity of 2012, is a results-oriented program that is designed to feed elementary school children whose families qualify for the federally funded National School Lunch Program and have little or no food on the weekends. Better test scores, improved reading skills, positive behavior, improved health and increased attendance have all been attributed to the success of this program. As little as \$100 feeds one American school child in our program for an entire 38-week school year. Blessings in a Backpack is currently feeding over 88,000 children in 48 states, the District of Columbia and 900 schools. Please visit [www.blessingsinabackpack.org](http://www.blessingsinabackpack.org). We are Feeding the Future of America® – one school at a time.

### **About the Cigna Foundation**

The Cigna Foundation is a private foundation funded by contributions from Cigna Corporation (NYSE: CI) and its subsidiaries. The Cigna Foundation supports organizations sharing its commitment to enhancing the health of individuals and families, and the well-being of their communities, with a special focus on those communities where Cigna employees live and work.

## **About Cigna**

Cigna Corporation (NYSE: CI) is a global health service company dedicated to helping people improve their health, well-being and sense of security. All products and services are provided exclusively by or through operating subsidiaries of Cigna Corporation, including Connecticut General Life Insurance Company, Cigna Health and Life Insurance Company, Life Insurance Company of North America and Cigna Life Insurance Company of New York. Such products and services include an integrated suite of health services, such as medical, dental, behavioral health, pharmacy, vision, supplemental benefits, and other related products including group life, accident and disability insurance. Cigna maintains sales capability in 30 countries and jurisdictions, and has more than 90 million customer relationships throughout the world. To learn more about Cigna®, including links to follow us on Facebook or Twitter, visit [www.cigna.com](http://www.cigna.com).

<sup>1</sup> FeedingAmerica.org: <http://map.feedingamerica.org/county/2014/child/texas/county/el-paso>