10 Under 20: Kid Food Entrepreneurs Fighting to Make a Difference

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To celebrate and support young entrepreneurs who are working to solve environmental and food insecurity problems locally and globally, Hormel Foods launched the 10 Under 20 Food Heroes Awards. The awards bring attention and grants to help the efforts of this inspiring group.

“Ranging from age 6 to 20, these young visionaries have created cutting-edge ideas, grassroots efforts and high-impact initiatives that are making a difference in their communities and the greater world,” said Jim Snee, Chairman of the Board, President and Chief Executive Officer at Hormel Foods.

“We have certainly been inspired by them and are proud to play a small part in their amazing journeys,” added Wendy Watkins, VP Corporate Communications.

Take a look at the amazing work of this year’s 10 honorees.

Elise Simokat, age 13, Box to Belly Challenge

Photo courtesy of Hormel Foods

Elise Simokat delivered holiday meals to students who are part of the Backpack Buddy program. Backpack Buddy provides nonperishable food and meals for students who may otherwise

not have a full meal during the weekend. Simokat's goal was to expand the food offerings to make sure no student went hungry and all would have warm food options during long holiday breaks.

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Simokat visited every Putnam County school and a few more in Kanawha, totaling around 24 schools. She was able to provide and deliver approximately 2,100 meals to students by raising money for meals via social media platforms. She also received a donation of 1,000 meals from Hormel Foods Corp. The company has since donated more than 2,000 additional meals to her and held a meal-packing event at a recent leadership meeting.

Grace Callwood, age 16, We Cancerve

Photo courtesy of Hormel Foods

At the age of seven, Grace Callwood was diagnosed with non-Hodgkin's lymphoma. In 2012, she started the We Cancerve Movement, a nonprofit that brings happiness and fun to children in hospitals, foster care and homeless shelters in and around Aberdeen, Md. At the age of 10, she even created a summer day camp for homeless children. Today, she is a healthy and inspiring young leader who decided to create an organization focused on helping vulnerable children – those experiencing homelessness or illness, and those in foster care. Now 16, she runs the organization with an all-youth board of advisors to bring food, toys and literacy to thousands of vulnerable young people.

Liam Hannon, age 13, Lunches of Love

Photo courtesy of Hormel Foods

Liam Hannon decided to skip summer camp to make a difference by creating lunches to give out to the homeless in Cambridge, Mass. To date, he has given away more than 10,000 thousand meals and has flown around the country spreading goodwill.

Mikaila Ulmer, age 15, Me & the Bees

Photo courtesy of Hormel Foods

After learning about how much bees do for the environment and how they're dying out, 4-year-old Mikaila Ulmer decided to take action by joining a local children's business competition. Her product is a family lemonade recipe sweetened with locally produced honey, with a portion of the sales going to organizations fighting to save the honeybee population. Thanks to a deal on *Shark Tank*, over the past decade, Mikaila has sold more than 1 million bottles of Me & the Bees Lemonade across 1,000 stores in the U.S., including Whole Foods and Macy's.

Adam Fellows, age 19, Food Pantry

Sherrill

Photo courtesy of Hormel Foods

For his high school senior project, Adam Fellows was focused on collecting food for his local food pantry, but there was a slight problem: The food pantry was closed. To combat this issue, Fellows decided to build a new food pantry in Sherrill, N.Y., because the community was not being served.

Kiki Hardee, age 6, Kiki’s Kindness Project: School Lunch Debt

Photo courtesy of Hormel Foods

At the wise old age of 5, Kiki Hardee heard that some of her classmates were unable to pay for lunch, which didn’t sit well with this young leader! Her compassion for her classmates created what is now called Kiki’s Kindness Project. Hardee created a cocoa-and-cookies stand to raise money to pay off school lunch debt and also went beyond her own school and helped pay off the district’s debt of $7,000.

Jahkil Jackson, age 13, Project I Am

Photo courtesy of Hormel Foods

Project I Am was created by 8-year-old Jahkil Jackson out of his heartfelt desire to help those in need. One day, he decided to help his aunt distribute food to homeless people in Chicago. After this experience, Jackson knew he wanted to do more to make a difference. It quickly became his mission to build awareness of homelessness and to help members of this vulnerable population by offering them what he calls “Blessing Bags” – a giveaway filled with wipes, socks, deodorant, hand sanitizer, granola bars, toothbrushes, toothpaste, bottled water and more.

Bradley Ferguson, age 19, Post Crashers

Photo courtesy of Hormel Foods

Nineteen-year-old Bradley Ferguson’s dedication to helping veterans was first evinced by his renovation of American Legion Post 295, a project made possible by funding from grants that he penned.

The following year, he witnessed the tragic death of a United States military veteran who set himself on fire out of despair. Ferguson became determined to help veterans suffering from mental illness and homelessness by hosting advocacy dinners. He formed Post Crashers, created a victory garden to serve as a source of food and cooked full-course meals to go along with the approximately 6,000 pounds of vegetables grown in the garden.

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To date, Ferguson and his team have provided about 2,000 full-course meals for previously homeless veterans living in transitional housing. In addition, they have made approximately 13,000 lunches for homeless clients of the Atlantic City Rescue Mission.

His second organization, Mustangs Against Hunger, established in 2017, is a high school food pantry that distributes thousands of pounds of nonperishable food to hundreds of families in need.

Lucas Hobbs, age 17, ChefLucasFood

Photo courtesy of Hormel Foods

Lucas Hobbs faced his cancer diagnosis with courage and strength, and upon completion of his treatment, the Make-A-Wish Foundation offered him the opportunity to have his wish granted. Many kids use their wishes to go to Disney or to attend a sporting event, but not Hobbs. His wish was to partner with Minnesota food trucks so that he could give back to his community and other kids battling cancer.

ChefLucasFood is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization founded in Minnesota by the Hobbs family during the fall of 2015 after Lucas Hobbs exercised his wish to use food trucks to communicate his appreciation to the community that supported him during his battle with cancer.

Today, through food industry partnerships, the organization hosts a broad range of food-truck charitable events. They benefit service organizations and serve the needs of families battling pediatric cancer by providing meals at no cost.

King Middle School

Photo courtesy of Hormel Foods

King Middle School students are known to excel at many things, but perhaps the daily commitment of the collective student body to eliminate food waste is among the greatest of their achievements. King Middle School students decided to take on food waste at their school and created a five-part waste separation system, including shared tables, compost guardians and plastic-bag reduction.

Joshua Williams, age 19, Joshua’s Heart Foundation

Photo courtesy of Hormel Foods

In addition to the 10 Under 20 Food Heroes, Hormel Foods will be honoring 19-year-old Joshua Williams. Now a junior at NYU’s Stern School of Business, he was just shy of 5 years old when he started Joshua’s Heart Foundation in Miami Beach, Florida. His mission has long been to put an end to poverty and food insecurity. Since 2005, Williams’ foundation has raised almost $2 million in financial support, distributed more than 3 million pounds of food, served more than 600,000 individuals, donated more than 200,000 toys, books and clothes and recruited more than 60,000 young people to help him do all of this incredible work. Hormel Foods has named him the first ambassador for the 10 Under 20 Food Impact Awards.

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