ANNUAL REPORT

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Brighter Bites provides fresh fruits and veggies to kids and their families who lack regular access to fresh food. We teach them how to use it and track their behavior change.

**PRODUCE DISTRIBUTION**
Every week, Brighter Bites heads to schools and summer camps to distribute fresh, seasonal produce for families and teachers to pick up and take home. Two bags contain about 50 servings of fruits and veggies, weighing 20-25 pounds.

**NUTRITION EDUCATION**
We teach kids, parents, and teachers how to make the most of their produce. We encourage teachers to utilize their bags during in-class lessons and we provide nutrition education handbooks, plus weekly tip sheets and recipes, for everyone to use at home.

**FUN FOOD EXPERIENCE**
During weekly produce pickups, Brighter Bites staff and volunteers create a fun food experience for the whole family, demonstrating colorful recipes and passing out samples that incorporate that week’s fresh produce.

“Brighter Bites is a theory-driven, evidence-based health promotion program that mitigates fruit and vegetable waste and converts it into a public health opportunity by systematically sourcing and channeling primarily donated produce into underserved communities.”
- Dr. Shreela Sharma, PhD, RD, LD, Professor of Epidemiology at UTHealth School of Public Health and Co-founder Brighter Bites

**OUR MISSION:**
To create communities of health through fresh food.
Dear friends,

It is hard to believe that almost ten years ago the idea for Brighter Bites was sparked when my son asked for berries instead of cake at a birthday party. The organization has grown beyond what I could have ever imagined, from the very first distribution in 2012 serving 150 families at just one school in Houston, to now serving almost 30,000 families at 125 schools across seven cities, and powered by 70 talented staff, a dynamic Board of Directors, and countless partners contributing critical resources.

The Brighter Bites mission of creating communities of health through fresh food is at the forefront of all that we do. While we have consistently implemented our three part formula of produce distribution + nutrition education + a fun food experience for the whole family, we have also sought ways to be more impactful with Brighter Bites families, schools, and communities where we partner. It is this drive to constantly evaluate the effectiveness of our program that has led us to the place we are today.

Thank you for coming along on this journey with us - your support, guidance, and encouragement has helped to strengthen the organization in countless ways. I am proud and humbled to see my little idea blossom into this thriving organization that is creating so much impact, and Brighter Bites would not be what it is today without the contributions of so many. During this time where promoting good health and strong immune systems is more important than ever, I truly feel that with your continued support, Brighter Bites will build even more communities of health through fresh food across the country.

With gratitude,
Lisa
Where do I start with an annual message for 2020, a year unlike no other? Brighter Bites started out the year excited about our program’s expansion and growth to our seventh market, Salinas, California; then the pandemic changed everything. Many Brighter Bites families who were so reliant on our program for weekly free, fresh produce and nutrition education resources were suddenly unable to engage with us due to quarantines and school closures. We did not allow barriers to stop us, we adjusted, we innovated, and we found ground-breaking ways to continue to accomplish our mission to create communities of health through fresh food. In the midst of adversity in 2020, Brighter Bites served the highest number of families ever, distributed the most produce ever, and had the farthest nutrition education reach ever.

Brighter Bites set an overall commitment to increase diversity representation among staff, participating communities, and schools. We developed and started implementation of a strategic plan - work that is more critical than ever, as the disparities in nutrition and obesity in underserved communities play a role in the health inequities that have been spotlighted during the pandemic.

We continued to implement policies and practices to be an employer of choice, and in 2020 we funded a 401k match, provided additional paid time off, and provided professional development opportunities for all full-time staff.

Even through these extremely challenging and stressful circumstances in 2020, I believe the organization grew in unimaginable ways that have ultimately made us the strongest and most effective we have ever been.

-Rich
**Milestone**

**MARCH**
Brighter Bites emergency response due to COVID-19 began

**APRIL**
Launched the first ever Family Resources page on our website, establishing a comprehensive resource for families

**MAY**
Our first-ever virtual fundraising event, Wine for a Cause, raised over $100,000

**JUNE**
Implemented first retail produce voucher program, ensuring Brighter Bites families receive continued access to produce during the pandemic

**JULY**
Shifted traditional model of utilizing parent volunteers to pack produce, to distributing pre-packed produce boxes via contactless drive-thru and walk-up distributions

**AUGUST**
Reached a total of 8 million pounds of produce distributed, just over the summer

**SEPTEMBER**
Began fall programming and released the new Brighter Bites Mobile App

**OCTOBER**
Hired first West Coast staff to run the Salinas, CA program launching in February 2021

**NOVEMBER**
Enhanced our internal and external strategy, efforts, and actions around Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion
Brighter Bites School Year 2020-21

Brighter Bites shifted its traditional programming model during these challenging times to continue to create communities of health through fresh food in a contact-free and safe environment.

PRODUCE DISTRIBUTION

In the year 2020, the program looked a little different from years past. In the wake of the coronavirus pandemic, Brighter Bites teamed up with produce suppliers (growers and distributors) to distribute pre-packed boxes of fresh produce to Brighter Bites schools. Each family received a box that contains a variety of fruits and vegetables, weighing about 20-25 pounds and equating to approximately 50 servings of fresh produce.

NUTRITION EDUCATION

Utilizing new digital platforms, we taught kids, parents, and teachers how to make the most of their produce boxes. Similar to past years, we trained and supported teachers in their implementation of the Coordinated Approach to Child Health (CATCH), Youth Understanding MyPlate (YUM), and other evidence-based programs that promote healthy food choices and physical activity. But instead of in-person education, we provided training and nutrition education through our new web pages, social media outlets, and a mobile app.

FUN FOOD EXPERIENCE

In the year 2020, we sent the “fun food experience” home and encouraged our families to create a safe, healthy, and fun food experience for the whole family by cooking nutritious meals together. Brighter Bites staff engaged with families through various digital platforms, like newsletters, text messages, web pages, our new Brighter Bites app, and social media, by sharing easy recipes, kitchen how-tos, culinary tips, and healthy topics.
**Programming**

**Produce Distribution: The Numbers**

Since our first distribution in 2012, we have distributed over 40 million pounds of produce and hundreds of thousands of nutrition materials to over 500,000 individuals.

*We distributed 12 million pounds to almost 30,000 families in the year 2020 alone!* 

**Growth**

Since our first distribution in 2012 at one site, we have expanded to 217 sites across six cities.

231 projected number of sites for the 2021-2022 school year
This year Brighter Bites went digital in the classroom. We created videos showcasing various healthy topics as well as supported teachers' access to digital nutrition education lessons. To better support our school staff, we created a new website page and our first-ever teacher newsletter.

“Brighter Bites and the staff has been a very rewarding experience for the students. The activities are engaging. Brighter Bites promotes a conversation about healthy food with the students which is of great benefit to the students as they learn to live a healthy lifestyle.”
-Brighter Bites Teacher

“Brighter Bites gives my students the opportunity to enjoy fruits and veggies, while learning new things about healthy habits. It is amazing for students to actually taste the foods they learn about. Brighter Bites helps shape nutritious practices for all of our students and families.”
-Brighter Bites Teacher

“My students have a great experience learning to be more healthy in their daily lives. They enjoy the activities and our discussions. I think this is a great program to encourage children how to be healthier. I myself have implemented this in my daily life.”
-Brighter Bites Teacher

We greatly increased digital engagement efforts through enhanced family newsletters, new website content for families, expanded social media presence through city-specific channels, and videos focusing on culinary education.

DIGITAL MATERIALS
This year, we greatly increased digital engagement efforts through enhanced family newsletters, new website content for families, expanded social media presence through city-specific channels, and videos focusing on culinary education.

NEW MOBILE APP
We developed the Brighter Bites mobile app which includes a contactless check-in for families, a full library of recipes and tip sheets, and a curated list of materials sent to families weekly based on produce received.
We are Data Driven

At Brighter Bites, we see data as a way to understand our families’ lived experiences, to ensure that we are implementing the program as planned, and, most of all, if we are making an impact on the schools, children, and families we serve.

- Dr. Shreela Sharma, PhD, RD, LD, Professor of Epidemiology at UTHEALTH School of Public Health and Co-founder Brighter Bites

We use state-of-the-art real-time monitoring of key performance indicators so our team is aware of program dosage, reach, fidelity, and acceptability at each school site, each week for every family enrolled in our program.

Additionally, using story-telling and PhotoVoice techniques, our data gives a voice to the families we serve.

Feedback is used for ongoing program improvement.

BRIGHTER BITES IMPACTS FAMILIES

STUDY RESULTS SHOW THAT CHILDREN AND PARENTS WHO RECEIVED BRIGHTER BITES DEMONSTRATED:

- **HEALTHIER HABITS**: Significant increase in amount of fruits and vegetables consumed
- **LESS ADDED SUGAR**: Significant decrease in amount of added sugars consumed among children
- **HEALTHIER SNACKING**: Significant increase in serving more fruits and vegetables as snacks

BRIGHTER BITES IS CREATING SUSTAINABLE DEMAND:

At two-year follow-up, both parents and children continue to consume significantly more fruits and vegetables.

- **98% of families** reported increased produce consumption during program
- **96% of families** maintained an increased produce consumption
- **19 servings** of additional produce consumed weekly two years after the program
**We are Data Driven**

**BRIGHTER BITES IMPACTS TEACHERS**

*How helpful were the following Brighter Bites components in influencing YOUR intake of fruits and vegetables?*

84% of teachers reported that Brighter Bites produce distribution influenced their OWN intake of fruits and vegetables.

**BRIGHTER BITES IMPACTS SCHOOLS**

*How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following statement: Brighter Bites has increased parental engagement in my school. (N=830)*

70% of teachers said that they agree/strongly agree that Brighter Bites increased parental engagement at their school.

**IN THE YEAR 2020:**

Brighter Bites developed four publications focused on COVID-19’s impacts on its families. Brighter Bites hosted COVID-19 webinars in conjunction with the Michael & Susan Dell Center.

For the full publications, visit www.brighterbites.org/research

**OUR SCIENTIFIC ADVISORY & DATA BOARD COMMITTEE:**

- Dr. Shreela Sharma, PhD, RD, LD, Professor of Epidemiology at UT Health School of Public Health
- Dr. Christine Markham, PhD, Professor and Interim Department Chair, Health Promotion and Behavioral Sciences, UT Health School of Public Health
- Dr. Faiyaz Bhojani, MD, DrPH, Global Health Lead, Downstream Manufacturing Regional Health Manager, North & South America at Royal Dutch Shell
Emergency grocery assistance for families based on COVID-19 survey responses. 
- 139 grocery store gift cards 
- 17 personal grocery deliveries 
- local resources for all

**EMERGENCY RESPONSE**

**RETAIL PRODUCE VOUCHER PROGRAM**
- $25 produce vouchers 
- 43,000 vouchers sent out 
- $650,000 in retail produce sales 
- 60% redemption rate

**BOX PROGRAM**
USDA farmers to Families produce boxes with nutrition education materials: 8 million pounds

“The vouchers were very helpful at the time when we had no source of income but had it to get my family produce. They were especially easy to use.”

-BRIGHTER BITES PARENT

*Most frequently selected items from retail vouchers*
ANNUAL REPORT

Financials

Revenue

- Government: $3,682,858
- Foundations: $1,520,760
- Corporations: $399,622
- Special Events: $299,172
- Individuals: $215,084
- Earned Revenue: $25,000

Total: $6,142,496

Expenses

- Programming: $5,249,831.17
- Management & General: $318,881
- Development: $131,812

Total: $5,700,524.17

$.92 of every $1.00 goes toward programming

Financials not audited

$8,737,417 in-kind donations of produce from food bank and produce industry partners
Brighter Bites has enhanced our students’ love of our school garden and increased their consumption of leafy greens, fresh fruit, and vegetables in our school meal program. The students often ask if they can plant vegetables they have been exposed to by Brighter Bites.

- Brighter Bites Teacher

My favorite part of working at Brighter Bites is the opportunity to engage with and educate kids about fresh food and healthy habits, ultimately contributing to their bright futures!

- Brighter Bites Employee
“My kids have never had pears. They love it now. And now instead of cookies I have them pick a fruit. So grateful.”
- Brighter Bites Family

“Brighter Bites has been an incredible asset to our school. The program has played a major part in helping us reduce rates of food insecurity in our school community as well as providing easier access to fresh produce to our students and families.”
- Brighter Bites School Administration Partner
### Thank you to our generous donors!

#### FINANCIAL CONTRIBUTORS

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With Gratitude

PRODUCE INDUSTRY PARTNERS

B&W Quality Growers
Baby Bay Produce
Brothers Produce
Capital Area Food Bank
Chelan Fresh
Church Brothers
City Harvest
Coastal Sunbelt
Collaborative for Fresh Produce
Crystal Valley Foods
D’Arrigo New York
DiMare Fresh
Dole
FoodMaven
Freshpoint Dallas
Freshpoint South Texas
GoFresh
GR Fresh
Hardie’s
Harry Chapin Food Bank
Houston Food Bank
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Mann Packing
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North Texas Food Bank
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Fannie Mae

SUE SMITH
Secretary,
Community Volunteer

VIC SMITH
President & CEO,
JV Smith Companies
Supporter Highlights

*** Produce Marketing Association ***

"PMA remains a steadfast supporter of Brighter Bites’ mission to connect families with fresh fruits and vegetables as we work together to grow a healthier world."
- Cathy Burns, CEO

*** The Walmart Foundation ***

"Access to healthy food builds the foundation for good health in communities. Our goal is to improve people’s ability to more consistently consume nutritious food, and we’re thrilled to support Brighter Bites who work every day to do just that."
- Eileen Hyde, Director of Sustainability, Food Systems & Food Access

*** Cigna Foundation ***

"Giving a child healthy food does far more than provide them with essential nutrition today. It provides them with a sense of security, and supports their future health, well-being and development, and that is foundational to our multi-year Healthier Kids For Our Future initiative. We are proud to support Brighter Bites and applaud the great work they do ensuring children and families have access to fresh produce while making nutrition fun."
- Susan Stith, Executive Director

*** The Kroger Zero Hunger | Zero Waste Foundation ***

"The Kroger Co. Zero Hunger | Zero Waste Foundation is excited to partner with Brighter Bites to expand their program. We celebrate their dedication to education and outreach efforts, and we look forward to working with their innovative team to help achieve our mission of creating communities free of hunger and waste."
- Sunny Reelhorn Parr, Executive Director
Supporter Highlights

"At H-E-B, education, health and hunger are 3 of our core pillars of giving. Brighter Bites helps us achieve our goals by having a data driven track record in each one of them. We are proud to support their efforts to build healthier habits among Texas families in our most underserved populations."
-Lisa Helfman, Director of Public Affairs of H-E-B Houston

"After eight years, the Brighter Bites and Houston Food Bank partnership is as strong as ever. And I am confident that we will continue to expand our reach throughout Houston even after the pandemic subsides."
-Brian Greene, President and CEO of the Houston Food Bank

"With Brighter Bites, we saw an opportunity to look at the (2020 SUNSET Rocks®) event through a different lens this year and give to the families that have been hit hard by the pandemic."
-Paul Mastronardi, President and CEO of Mastronardi Produce

"We have been absolutely blessed to receive these generous and kind produce donations. The response from our community has been overwhelming. We are thankful for the partnership forged by Council Member Dannielle Glaros, and for the compassionate work of the Brighter Bites team. We the people are grateful. This is the type of unity needed to survive the times."
-Pastor Everett Pope of United Baptist Church

"Taylor Farms is pleased to support the Brighter Bites mission through fresh produce donations and financial support benefitting Brighter Bites families across the country."
-Bruce Taylor, Chair and CEO of Taylor Farms
A Look Back at 2020

Determined
Flexibility
Unexpected
Wholesome
Accomplishments
Resilient
Innovation
Rollercoaster
Pivot
A Look Forward to 2021

Equity     Normalcy     Emerge
Hopeful    Engaging     Well-being
Game-changing New-levels
Growth
Flourish     Goals     Prosper
Model       Promising     Open-minded
The better we nourish, the brighter we flourish.