



Chicago's West Side community celebrates back-to-school with Ingredion and The Hatchery

August 26, 2021



Ingredion's business resource group A.B.L.E. (Alliance of Black Employees) collaborated with [The Hatchery Chicago](#), a non-profit food business incubator, to support a back-to-school community event for children of the Garfield Park neighborhood on Chicago's West Side.

The event aimed to ensure that every child in the Garfield Park area had the necessary supplies to begin the new school year, especially after a year of distance learning.

The Garfield Park Conservatory, Garfield Park Council, Allies for Community Business and Synergy Flavors joined Ingredion and The Hatchery in providing tips on preparing delicious and nutritious meals as students return to in-person classes. Each organization provided a healthy meal concept or recipe and a takeaway item to replicate the recipe at home.

Volunteers from the Westchester and Argo chapters of A.B.L.E. stuffed nearly 250 backpacks with supplies, including lunch boxes, water bottles, notebooks, folders, pens, rulers and crayons. Also inside were cards from Ingredion employees across North America with words of motivation to start the school year off right. Parents were particularly heartened by these personalized messages. "You have no idea how much this is going to help us. Thank you!" expressed the parent of a first-grade student.



"It was a real privilege to be able to contribute to the Garfield Park community and to support these fantastic kids," said Jorgen Kokke, executive vice president and president, Americas, and executive sponsor for A.B.L.E. "I want to take the opportunity to thank our A.B.L.E. volunteers for coming together to make this happen."

"Giving back and volunteering in the community is a core tenet of the African American culture. It has been an honor for us to express our Care First value in such a practical way by participating in this communal effort to support residents of the Garfield Park community," said Laurreta Katsriku, director, global hydrocolloids business management, and global president of A.B.L.E. "The smiles on the faces of the kids – and their parents – made it all worthwhile."



Nelson Serrano-Bahri, innovation and culinology manager, emerging business, led the team's planning and coordination of the event. "When we were approached about the opportunity, there was no doubt in my mind that Ingredion had to participate in some way. It was amazing to see how willing our employees were to help make this a great event. Our goal was to make sure that these kids had all they needed to start the new school year successfully, and I know we reached and even over-delivered on that promise," he said. Amari, a middle school student who attended the event, summed up the atmosphere. "This makes me excited to go back to school," he said.

Donations for this event were supported by A.B.L.E., Ingredion's North America Marketing and Culinology teams, and Ingredion customers Kellogg's, Griffith Foods, Synergy Flavors, Vienna Beef and Crayola.