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ILLINI FOOTBALL LINEMEN USE NIL OPPORTUNITIES TO “HELP TACKLE HUNGER” IN STATEWIDE FOOD DRIVE

After the covid-19 crisis left 1 in 5 Illinois children suffering from food insecurity, a group of nine University of Illinois football linemen have decided to use their celebrity to “Help Tackle Hunger” across the state.

The “Help Tackle Hunger” program was the brainchild of Illinois alumni, John and Bonnie Dauer, who were determined to use the new name, image and likeness (NIL) possibilities to boost the competitive edge for Illini football while bringing attention to a statewide community crisis. NIL laws allow student athletes to earn compensation by entering contracts for personal appearances, autographs, use of their pictures, and more. Here, the linemen will be actively engaged to make a critical impact.

“When we saw the national push for college athletes to earn money by licensing their celebrity, we knew there had to be a way for us to help the Illinois football program remain competitive in the NIL world, while simultaneously combating the food insecurity crisis in Illinois,” John Dauer stated. “We were thrilled to see the Illini fan collective, Illini Guardians, already situated to bring such ideas to life.”

Illini Guardians contracted with Bryce Barnes, Zylon Crisler, Jer’Zhan Newton, Alex Palczewski, Julian Pearl, Alex Pihlstrom, Keith Randolph, Jordyn Slaughter and Jamal Woods to pay them for their role in orchestrating both a local in-person food drive and a virtual food drive. The players will meet with students at St. Matthews Catholic School in Champaign to kick off a competition as to which class can donate the most food items to Feeding Illinois and its system of local food banks across the state. Coach Bielema has enthusiastically offered to host all participating students at an open Illini Football practice in October.

Feeding Illinois has also launched a virtual food drive through the Eastern Illinois Foodbank, whereby Illini fans can donate to purchase food items for those in need. Every dollar donated through the virtual drive will buy 10 meals for Illinois families. [Click here to donate!](#) All contributors should select “Illini Football” in the drop down for their contributions.

“We are so excited to work with these great Illini student-athletes to use their notoriety to bring attention to the growing food insecurity crisis,” said Amanda Borden, Vice President of Development of the Eastern Illinois Food Bank. “We are hoping the commitments from the Dauers and the players can serve as a template for other universities to use their NIL efforts in the same way, to really help tackle hunger in Illinois and elsewhere.”

Please [visit the virtual drive here](#). To help fund Illini NIL initiatives like this one, visit IlliniGuardians.com, and subscribe or make a one-time contribution.

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