

# Clark Virtual Museum LLC

# NEWSLETTER

September 21, 2024

Clark Virtual Museum LLC

"More Than A Museum, We Honor The Life and Legacy of Our Ancestor"

## What's New

- How The Black Panther Party Free Breakfast For Children Program Began
- The Illinois Chapter BPP Free Breakfast for Children Program
- Peoria Chapter of the ILBPP Free Breakfast for Children
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The Black Panther Party  
Free Breakfast for Children Program



# How The Black Panther Party Free Breakfast for Children Program Began



The BPP's Free Breakfast for Children Program started in January 1969. It was the first official survival program of the BPP. The BPP Free Breakfast Program began as a collaborative effort between the BPP and St. Augustine's Episcopal Church in Oakland, California. Father Earl Neil, the church's minister, and Ruth Beckford-Smith, a church member began supporting Huey Newton after talking with his girlfriend LaVerne and learning about the Black Panther Party. Father Neil visited Huey in jail and began allowing the BPP to hold meetings at the church,

According to a 1968 CBS special report, Hunger in America, a large percent of children did not receive enough protein, milk, vegetables, and fruit. The report attributed much of the hunger and malnutrition to waste caused by government policies, and the failures of government programs enacted to feed the poor and hungry.

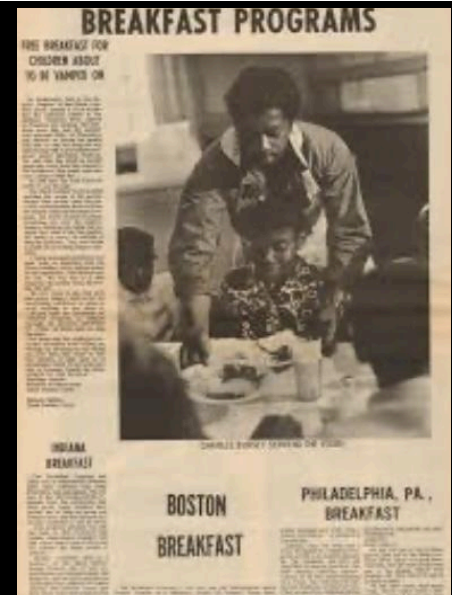
**FREE BREAKFAST  
FOR CHILDREN  
SERVED HERE EVERY  
SCHOOL DAY MORNING**



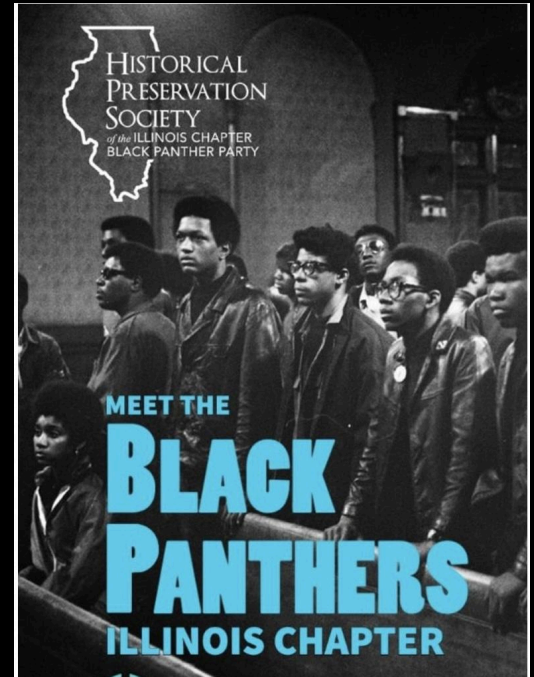


The BPP Free Breakfast for Children Program was announced in the January 15, 1969 issue of The Panther Party newspaper. The headline read, "How can children learn anything when most of their stomachs are empty?" In late January 1969, The BPP offered the first free breakfast, which was attended by eleven children. By the end of the week, 135 children came. The program provided the children healthy, nutrient rich meals to eliminate the devastating mental and physical effects of hunger and malnutrition, which was widespread in poor Black communities across America.

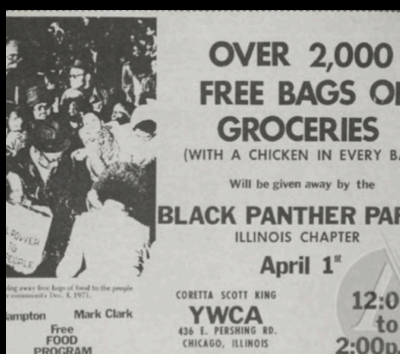
The Black Panther Party Central Committee established guidelines for the BPP Free Breakfast for Children Program, which included sample menus, facility requirements, and staffing needs. They also provided guidance on soliciting donations, recruiting volunteers, scouting locations, and working the program.



# The Illinois Chapter of the Black Panther Party Free Breakfast for Children Program



The Illinois Chapter of The Black Panther Party began its first Free Breakfast For Children Program on April 1, 1969, at North Lawndale's Better Boys Foundation. IILBPP Deputy Minister of Education Billy Brooks, and Deputy Chairman Fred Hampton Sr. met with directors Warner Saunders and Eugene Perkins. Around that s.A.M.E. time another Illinois BPP Free Breakfast for Children location opened in the Chicago area. During the first week, The ILBPP fed over 1100 children. Within two weeks, they fed thousands!





# Peoria Branch of the ILBPP

## Free Breakfast for Children

In Peoria, Defense Captain Mark Clark started a BPP Free Breakfast for Children Program at the historic Ward Chapel African Methodist Church, the oldest church in Peoria. Numerous great leaders and dignitaries had been known to have visited Peoria's Ward Chapel A.M.E. over the years, including Frederick Douglass and Booker T. Washington. In the spring of 1969 Ward Chapel was under the leadership of Pastor Blaine Ramsey Jr. whom Mark Clark was acquainted with from his days in the Peoria Chapter NAACP. Pastor Ramsey agreed to open up their facilities to Mark and his Peoria Branch ILBPP members. Ward Chapel A.M.E. was the only church in Peoria to support the BPP Free Breakfast for Children Program



Defense Captain Mark Clark and BPP Peoria Branch members prepared free breakfast for the children five days a week. They also prepared and distributed food bags to needy and elderly in the inner-city area. Peoria's BPP Free Breakfast Program at Ward Chapel lasted approximately six months. It ended because the government set up a special task force focused on eliminating the Black Panthers. Church officials began receiving threats from suspected undercover FBI agents and informants forcing them to discontinue the program.



## The Illinois Black Panther Party

### Served Breakfast To Thousands

At its peak, the Illinois Chapters BPP Free Breakfast for Children Program served thousands of children daily and operated locations in Peoria, Rockford, Carbondale, East St. Louis, St. Louis and numerous Chicago area locations, including at Better Boys Foundation, Jackson Boulevard Church, , Marcy Newberry Association, . St. Andrews Episcopal Church, The People's Church, Henry Horner Homes,, Cabrini Green, St. Dominic's Church,, St. Martin De Pores Church, Brotherhood of Boys Republic, Fairfax House, Madden Park, Robert Taylor Homes, Trinity Lutheran Church, Altgeld Gardens, Our Lady of the Gardens Church, Southside Office, Our Redeemer Church, and St. Bartholomew.



# The Impact of the BPP Free Breakfast for Children Program

The impact of the BPP Free Breakfast for Children Program was evident as many of the children served had never eaten breakfast before the Panthers started their program. School officials reported how different the children were after eating breakfast. They were alert, not falling asleep in class, and they weren't hungry!

By the end of 1969 there were breakfast programs in BPP Chapters in 23 cities. The BPP Free Breakfast for Children Program thrived because it was organic and structured. The BPP received food donated by local businesses, churches, and community-based organizations. It was not dependent upon government funding so it didn't encounter delays in funding, funding gaps, or burdensome procedures and children were welcome regardless of need. The BPP's program was highly effective in improving the condition of school children because it offered healthy, nutrient rich foods. In contrast, The USDA government programs were largely inefficient and ineffective, mainly distributed starchy foods that caused weight gain and lacked the nutrients necessary to combat malnutrition. Even though the USDA had piloted free breakfast efforts during the mid-1960s, their program didn't take off until the early 1970s—right around the same time the Black Panthers' programs were dismantled.

## Article References

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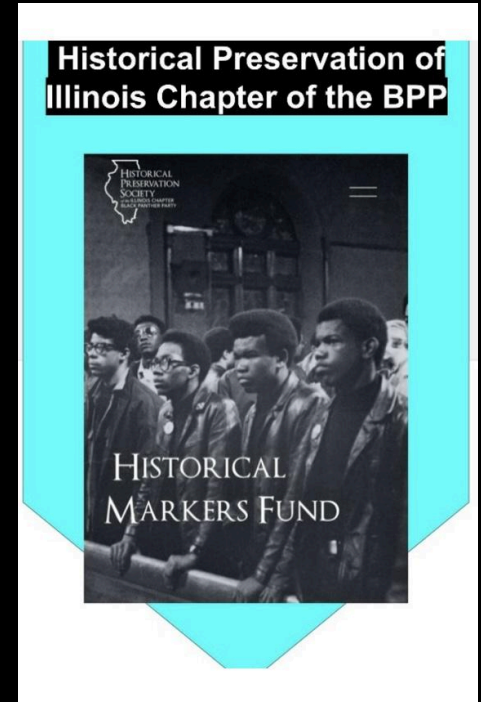
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# The Historical Preservation and Landmarking Of The ILBPP!



In 2023, The Historical Preservation Society of the ILBPP obtained approval of the state and the National Park Service to place the Illinois Chapter of the Black Panther Party on the National Register of Historic Places. The project marks and preserves the history of locations significant to the Illinois Black Panther Party and developing Black Panther Party Heritage Trail in Illinois

To learn more about the Historical Preservation and Landmarking of the ILBPP visit their website: [ilbpp.org](http://ilbpp.org)





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Best Regards, Rose X (Clark) Morris, Founder and Curator

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