Program Established: 1992
Purpose of Program:
Assistance League of Charlotte, through Operation Check Hunger (OCH), feeds at-risk school children in the Charlotte-Mecklenburg community. The purpose of the program is to relieve hunger among students as they strive to improve academically. There are currently four components to Operation Check Hunger.

Distribution of Food:
The main effort provides take home backpacks every weekend to children at risk in thirteen Charlotte Mecklenburg Schools (CMS). Each backpack contains full-size portions of protein, vegetables, fruit and calcium products to supplement the student and their family’s breakfast, lunch, and dinner weekend meals. Assistance League of Charlotte has significantly increased its involvement in this program, in collaboration with Second Harvest Food Bank of Metrolina, a local hunger-relief agency. A total of 400 students will benefit from this extra food weekly during the 2020-2021 school year and an additional 85 students for six weeks during the summer.

OCH has established in-school emergency food pantries at two CMS schools that are monitored by school counselors and social workers. The use of the pantry is for families needing food assistance due to a variety of reasons, including homelessness and family crisis. More school pantries are being considered.

In 2020-2021, OCH will sponsor and operate 11 mobile pantries at four high-need schools. This involves a one-night event when families are invited to select canned items, fresh produce, bread, meat and eggs. Families typically leave with 40-50 pounds of food. Member volunteers assist at this ongoing effort to fight hunger by providing food for up to 200 participating school families at each event.

OCH also supplies Metro School, a special needs school of 250 students, the following: snacks monthly to supplement life skills field trip lunches, cases of applesauce to assist with administration of medication, and 250 packaged snacks for their Special Olympics games.

Funding:
Operation Check Hunger is funded through foundation grants, private and corporate donations, chapter fundraising events and the Assistance League Thrift Shop.

In 2019-2020, Operation Check Hunger provided 450 elementary school children with weekend backpacks containing enough food for a family of four. ALC also funded summer backpacks. Total backpacks for the summer and school year = 17,460 backpacks. Additionally, OCH funded approximately 2200 additional backpacks as part of the COVID-19 response. OCH supplied food for medication administration and field trips to 250 Metro School special needs students and supported two in-school pantries. Eleven mobile pantries at five schools served 6,944 individuals. A protein donation to Second Harvest Food Bank and Loaves and Fishes through outside sources provided more than 63,000 individual servings that included ground turkey and canned chicken.