

Michelle Obama, Jill Biden volunteer at food bank

Washington Post

By MARY CLARE JALONICK

The Associated Press

Wednesday, April 29, 2009 8:17 PM

WASHINGTON -- First lady Michelle Obama kept her promise to actively volunteer in the Washington area Wednesday, bagging lunches for hungry children at a local food bank on her husband's 100th day in office.

Mrs. Obama and Jill Biden, wife of Vice President Joe Biden, joined more than 100 congressional spouses at the Capital Area Food Bank on Wednesday, passing out packages of wheat pasta and cans of pineapple as volunteers bagged meals for low-income kids in the area.

The bags of food are expected to feed 1,000 children as part of a program that serves bagged to-go lunches to families on the weekends in lieu of free lunches at school. Each bag includes a variety of healthy foods and a recipe book and is designed to feed a child for five meals.

This is the second time the first lady has volunteered for the hungry in the District of Columbia. In March, she served lunch to the homeless at a soup kitchen.

"I think it's important for Americans to see you all here doing this," she told the bipartisan group of spouses, thanking them. "We can give something back to the D.C. community that often times don't get to see us."

The event was sponsored by the food bank and Feeding America, a hunger relief group. According to the food bank, one in two children in the District of Columbia are at risk of going hungry.

Several of the congressional spouses said Michelle Obama has inspired them to volunteer more frequently in Washington. Paul Pelosi, husband of Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi, said he flew in from San Francisco to attend.

"Michelle Obama has totally stepped up the idea of community service," he said as he handed out dried fruit snacks.

Abigail Blunt, wife of Republican Rep. Roy Blunt of Missouri, also bagged food with the first lady. She said much of the community service done by congressional spouses often happens out in their districts, not in Washington.

Mrs. Obama dressed down in sneakers and capri pants for the event. She hugged and joked with food bank volunteers and spouses from both parties as she walked around the center and filled bags of food.

"This is just one very important, very visible example of how a group of people can come together and feed thousands of kids," she said.