



Mayors and Summer Food

What if you could feed a hungry child, bring more federal dollars back to Colorado and ease the financial strain on your local charities and food banks all at the same time? Would you help?



The Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) provides funding to serve free meals to children aged 18 years and younger throughout the summertime. This 100 percent federally subsidized program is an important and underutilized resource for struggling families who rely on free or reduced-price meals during the school year. However, less than 11 percent of children who ate free and reduced-price lunch during the 2010-2011 school year received summer lunch in 2011. While federal dollars supporting SFSP are left on the table, the resources of local food banks and charities are strained – further exacerbating the economic impacts of poverty on the community.

In the Metro Denver area alone, including Adams, Arapahoe, Boulder, Denver, Douglas, and Jefferson counties, more than 100,000 low-income children did not access summer lunch in June 2011. If an additional 40 percent of metro Denver's low-income children accessed summer food, it would mean an additional 31,819 children receiving summer lunch and an additional \$2.4 million in federal funding in the month of June alone. So how can this problem be solved? The solution is twofold: more sites are needed and awareness about the program must to be raised among families with children.

In 2011, Hunger Free Colorado partnered with the Metro Mayors Caucus to engage mayors on summer food; eleven cities were identified as needing additional sites. Mayors were provided with information on the importance of summer food and the extent of need within their community. Mayors and city staff played an important role by identifying potential feeding site locations and helping to engage key partners within the community.



These partnerships helped facilitate new sites. In Aurora, a proposal to the city council allowed for Moorehead Recreation Center to participate as a site. Already providing snacks, they were able to access federal funds for meals and served an average of 50 children per day at no additional cost. In Lakewood, the 11th Avenue Head Start building became a distribution site for meals provided by the Jefferson County School District. This partnership between the city and school district was a great example of the flexibility the Summer Food Service Program provides. In Commerce City, the mayor and staff were able to connect with an active church that sponsored the program. This site served hot meals to an average of 85 children per day in the park across the street from their facility.

Once the 2011 sites were operating, six mayors visited a site within their city and ate lunch with the children. This was a great opportunity for the mayor to experience the program and raise awareness about its availability. Mayor Murphy of Lakewood commented, "I want to call attention to this program to ensure that parents know about it and let residents know that there are efforts to end childhood hunger in our community."

Please help spread the word about the availability of the Summer Food Service Program in your community. To find out more information or to locate a site nearest you, visit www.summerfoodcolorado.org, call 855-855-4626, or text "FOOD" to (720)-HFC-EAT5.

Consider these 4 ways to help raise awareness about hunger and the SFSP in Colorado:

1. Promote summer food and Hunger Free Colorado's Hotline in your community newsletter or on your website.
2. Tell one service organization (e.g., Rotary) about Hunger Free Colorado and suggest that they invite us to present.
3. "Like" Hunger Free Colorado on Facebook from your City Government or Mayor's page.
4. Plan a visit to a SFSP site within your community.