

TUESDAY, JUNE 12, 2012

This month, children across our service area will begin summer vacation. While summer vacation is considered to be freedom for many children, for those facing hunger it means losing the one place that they can count on for a meal - school.

For most of the country, the face of hunger is surprising. It does not discriminate against age, race, gender, or ethnicity. It affects working families who are forced to make difficult choices between food and basic necessities such as utilities, medicine, or rent.

The USDA's Summer Food Service Program will help by providing meals in June and July. Through the SFSP, summer programs can provide up to two healthy meals or snacks per day, five days per week to children and teenagers, 18 years and younger, at approved central sites in low-income areas. This year 40 locations across Wichita are participating.

But, the SFSP is only one piece to the hunger puzzle for children during the summer. We also work with our agencies and community partners in several communities across the state to provide meals to kids in locally organized summer feeding programs, where SFSP doesn't reach, or in the gap after the program ends and before school resumes.

It's a busy summer for us, and a more hopeful summer for hungry Kansas kids, thanks to Your Kansas Food Bank and our partners across the state.

Sincerely,
Brian Walker, President / CEO

AGENCY SPOTLIGHT – A few years ago when the SFSP ended in Anthony, our pantry partner stepped up to the plate to ensure children in their community had a place to eat lunch during the summer. This year marks the 8th year that the Anthony Ministerial Alliance has successfully engaged the community and provided this great service.

FILLING THE GAP: SUMMER MEALS FOR KIDS – There is a two week gap in time when the Summer Food Service Program ends and when school begins. This is where "Filling the Gap" comes into play. "Filling the Gap" provides shelf stable meals to children in need when Federal programs are not in operation. Partners for Wichita have been instrumental in helping us coordinate sites and volunteers where meals can be served. This year, there are ten gap sites in Wichita. Those locations include four neighborhood city halls, Interfaith Ministries, Urban League, and four area churches.



EXTRA! RENO COUNTY FILLS THE GAP! – We are thrilled to announce that in partnership with the Reno County Food Bank, Filling the Gap will be offered in Hutchinson as well this year. Two locations will serve as meal sites.

PANTRIES GEARING UP FOR SUMMER – Pantries across our service area have been gearing up for the influx of families seeking assistance this summer due in part to children being out of school. Our Hunger Care partners always see an increase in the summer months and some of them have taken steps to offer "Kid Bags" to families with children this year. Several of the rural communities in NW and SE Kansas that do not have the USDA Summer Food Service Program have taken matters into their own hands. They have created their own version of summer meals just for kids. While these are take home bags rather than a meal setting where kids go for food, children are still being looked after to ensure they have adequate food for the summer months.

SUMMER BACKPACK PILOT PROGRAM: YEAR TWO – This summer marks the second year in a pilot program run by USDA for summer backpacks. Your Kansas Food Bank is working with three communities: Wilson, Arkansas City, and Burden to supply them with shelf stable meals to provide food to children on the weekends. These meals meet USDA requirements of the recommended amount of meat/meat alternative, bread/grain, fruit/vegetable and milk, and Made in the USA. Between the three sites, 7,608 meals will be offered as weekend backpack food. Sites have already reported a positive response by the children receiving their own weekend food again this year!



FOOD BANK FUN FACT – Of the almost one million pounds of cereal we've distributed in the past decade, Kellogg's Apple Jacks is reported as the most popular with kids.