

MEDIA RELEASE

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Arkansas Hunger Relief Alliance is the lead partner in Arkansas for the No Kid Hungry campaign.

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Kicking Off Summer: Free Summer Meals Mean Arkansas Kids Will Get the Nutrition They Need to Stay Healthy and Active

JACKSONVILLE, AR - (May 23, 2017) More than 287,000 Arkansas kids receive free or reduced price school meals. During the summer, many of these kids are at risk of not getting nutritious meals every day.



The Arkansas Hunger Relief Alliance, lead partner for the No Kid Hungry campaign in Arkansas, Jacksonville North Pulaski County Special School District, and representatives from Arkansas Department of Education, Arkansas Department of Human Services and guests gathered at Warren Dupree Elementary School in Jacksonville to raise awareness about the availability of free summer meals for kids when school is out. The theme of the event: **Text FOOD to 877 877**. This is the easiest way of finding a free summer meals site anywhere in the state.



Superintendent Tony Wood addressing students at Warren Dupree Elementary School

Jacksonville North Pulaski County School District Superintendent Tony Wood said, "There is real need for this program in our community. Many of our students have limited or uncertain access to safe and nutritious food when schools are not in session. We are pleased to be a part of this collaborative outreach."

The Arkansas No Kid Hungry campaign helps build sustainable, summer programs that will help assure kids get nutritious meals that will keep them healthy and ready to learn when school begins again in the fall. Patty Barker, Arkansas No Kid Hungry campaign director, reminded guests and the media that the "summer slide," a recognized retention deficit that effects low-income children when they don't get adequate nutrition, is a problem we can eliminate by making sure children have access to healthy, nutritious meals during the summer and anytime school is not in session.

It can cost an additional \$300 to feed children who would otherwise eat meals at school. That is a serious burden for many low-income families who are struggling to make ends meet. Free summer meals in safe, supervised locations in cities and towns across the state mean parents can feel more confident that their children will be getting nutritious food.

The new Jacksonville North Pulaski County School District, with a 74% free/reduced student population, will be serving free summer meals to kids under 18 from several locations this summer (see below). They are one of hundreds of free summer meals sites around Arkansas this summer. Sponsoring organizations like schools, churches, Boys & Girls Clubs, libraries, and other non-profit organizations will feed children 18 years of age and younger during the summer. The authorized summer meals sponsors are reimbursed by USDA for meals they feed to children under either the Summer Food Service Program or the Seamless Summer Program. Children do not have to register or present identification to eat a nutritious meal at any authorized meal site.

Background

Arkansas has one of the highest rates of childhood food insecurity in the nation, with 1 in 4 children (25%)* uncertain of where they will find

their next meal. In the summer of 2016, 182 Summer Meals sponsors served more than 2.4 million meals at 1,044 sites across the state. In 2017, we are again working to help build sustainable meal sites in all 75 counties. Schools, churches, libraries, community centers, Boys and Girls Clubs, city, state and county agencies and other non-profit sponsors who meet eligibility requirements are reimbursed with United States Department of Agriculture funds for the nutritionally approved meals they serve to children 18 and under when school is out for the summer.



Find Free Summer Meals for Kids

- Text FOOD to 877 877 (they will get a return message asking for their zip code. Once provided, a list of sites in their area will be texted back in seconds)
- Go to <http://www.fns.usda.gov/summerfoodrocks>
An interactive map allows parents and caregivers to locate summer meals sites near them
- Call 1-866-3-HUNGRY or 1-877-8-HAMBRE A live operator will ask for a zip code and provide a list of sites in the caller's neighborhood.

Story:

"What's for Dinner?"

An Arkansas Hunger Relief Alliance field manager was visiting a summer meals site during lunchtime and began talking with the children who were there for lunch. Our field manager turned to the 10-year-old sitting next to her and, in an attempt to begin a conversation, asked the young girl what she would be having for dinner that night. The girl replied, "this," holding up the apple from her lunch tray. This is not an unusual case. Kids should not have to hoard food because they're unsure when they will get more. The Summer Meals and Seamless Summer programs are often the only things standing between too many kids and malnutrition when school is not in session.

Jacksonville North Pulaski School District Summer Meals Schedule

(6/6-6/29) Pinewood Elem
(Tuesday-Thursday)

(6/5-6/23) Jax High
(Monday-Friday)
(6/5-6/30) Jax Middle
(Monday-Friday)
(6/12-6/30) Dupree Elementary
(Monday-Friday)

*Map the Meal Gap-2017, Feeding America, 2017