MEDIA RELEASE

Free Summer Meals
Help keep kids active and healthy through the summer months.

LITTLE ROCK, AR (May 26, 2015)- Members of the Arkansas No Kid Hungry campaign, Little Rock School District Superintendent Baker Kurrus, representatives from the Department of Education and Department of Human Services gathered at Mabelvale Elementary School to kick off the 2015 USDA Summer Food Service Program in Arkansas. The annual event focuses awareness on the importance of providing free meals to children from low income families who might otherwise not get enough nutritious food during the summer. Mabelvale Elementary School Principal Darian Smith welcomed guests. The school's award winning drum corps, cheerleaders and dance team entertained guests.

Little Rock School District Superintendent Baker Kurrus told students, "There is nothing you can't do. We, all of us on this stage today, are here because of you. You're all that matters to us, and we're committed to making sure you all get the nutritious food you need to be healthy and strong all year-round."

Patty Barker, Arkansas No Kid Hungry campaign director, reminded the group that of the more than 250,000 Arkansas children who are eligible for free or reduced price school lunch, 85% are NOT getting summer meals. "That's a lot of kids who are probably not getting enough to eat," said Barker. "We want to let parents know about free meals for their kids this summer, so all you kids, tell your parents they can find a site by TEXTING 'FOOD' to 877 877."

Background

Arkansas has one of the highest rates of child hunger in the nation, with more than 1 in 4 children struggling with hunger. In the summer of 2014, Summer Food Service Program sponsors **served more than 4 million meals at over 1,200 sites across the state.** In 2015, we are again working to assure that we have 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 by the Department of Human Services Child Nutrition unit with USDA funds for the meals they serve to children when school is out for the summer.

To know more, contact Nancy Conley at ncon-ley@arhungeralliance.org or

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USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

Summer Meals Talking Points

- More than 60% of Arkansas students depend on school breakfast and lunch during the school year. When school is not in session, 85% of these kids are not getting free summer meals which puts them at risk of not getting enough to eat.
- Kids often make unhealthy choices when they are hungry, opting for sugary drinks, chips and other fatty foods.
- Not getting enough to eat over the summer adds to the "academic decline" that many kids show when school starts again. They don't retain what they learned in the previous school year.
- The Summer Meals program OR Summer Food Service Program, funded by the US Department of Agriculture and administered by the Arkansas Department of Human Services, provides free nutritionally balanced meals for kids 18 years of age and under at safe locations.
- Family budgets are under added pressure in the summer when their children are not getting the free or reduced price meals they rely on during the school year.
- Families with low incomes report that it takes an average of $300 more a month to feed their kids in the summer.
  Sites are often sponsored by schools, faith based organizations, churches, community centers, Boys and Girls Clubs, libraries, housing authorities, municipal agencies, food pantries, food banks, and other authorized non-profit organizations.
- There is no registration or identification required and will not effect other benefits the family may be receiving.

- **Parents and care givers can find a summer meals site in their communities by:**
  Going to www.whyhunger.org/findfood where they will find the Summer Meals option listed
  Calling 1-866-3-HUNGRY or 1-877-8-HAMBRE (a live operator will ask for their address and give them a list of sites
  Texting FOOD to 877 877 (they will be asked for their zip code and a list of sites in their area will be texted back in seconds.

USDA Nutrition Requirements

Breakfast

1 serving of milk

1 serving of fruit or vegetable

1 serving of whole grains

Lunch or supper

1 serving of milk

2 servings of fruits and/or vegetables

1 serving of grain

1 serving of meat or protein alternative

Snack (must include 2 of the following)

1 serving of milk

1 serving of fruit or vegetables

1 serving of grains

1 serving of protein