



**For information**

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## **Free Summer Meals in Rochester Available Starting June 29**

ROCHESTER, NY — Free summer meals for youth ages 18 and younger who live in the city of Rochester will be available at several dozen locations starting Monday, June 29.

Distribution and promotion of free breakfasts and lunches is coordinated by the Summer Meals Planning Committee, a community coalition whose mission is to increase summer meal participation.

The committee's goal is that by 2016, half of Rochester's children and youth who participate in the National School Lunch Program during the school year will take advantage of the free summer meals. A March 2013 report by the Center for Governmental Research found that as many as 16,000 youth from low-income families in Rochester are missing out on free summer meals made available to meet their nutritional needs while school is not in session.

Over the summer months last year, 5,791 more meals were served compared to summer 2013, continuing a trend of increased summer meal participation that began in 2012.

The 2015 Summer Meals Site List of where open meals are available can be found by clicking on "Eat Healthy" and "Summer Meals" at [www.healthikids.org](http://www.healthikids.org) or by dialing 2-1-1. The locations include schools, recreation and outreach centers, churches, and more.

In an effort to help community partners provide additional summer meals or add more days of meal service, Rochester Area Community Foundation awarded \$25,000 in Summer Meals Mini-Grants to nine organizations.

These grants, ranging from \$1,000 to \$5,000, will be used to buy tables, tent canopies, chairs, coolers, and refrigerators for summer meal services. Funding also supported the hiring of temporary volunteer coordinators, where needed, to ensure meal sites are properly staffed with volunteers to ensure safe, supportive, and welcoming environments. The grant recipients are:

- 441 Ministries (\$2,000)
- Boys & Girls Club of Rochester (\$1,000)

- Cameron Community Ministries (\$5,000)
- New Life Church of Christ (\$1,683)
- Outreach Community Center (\$2,500)
- SUNY Brockport for its summerLEAP program with Rochester City School 17 (\$2,639)
- True Gospel Church (\$3,178)
- YMCA of Greater Rochester (\$5,000)
- Young & Gifted Global Ministries (\$2,000)

These locations partner with a Rochester summer meals sponsor, including the City of Rochester, Foodlink, or the Rochester City School District.

Although the Community Foundation has provided these mini-grants for three years, this is the first summer that funding supported the purchase of equipment to engage youth in physical activities at the meal sites to help boost participation. That equipment included balls, cones, hula hoops and more.

“Nutrition is not just for the school year,” notes Jennifer Leonard, president and CEO of the Community Foundation. “We have the opportunity and obligation to work together and ensure that Rochester’s children do not go to bed hungry this summer.”

According to ACT Rochester, the childhood poverty rate has increased to 50.1 percent, ranking highest among the 18 benchmark cities. In that group, Rochester is now the only city where more than half of the children live in poverty.

The summer meals program is designed to provide food to youth 18 and younger when the regular school year is not in session. Begun in the mid-1970s and administered by the U. S. Department of Agriculture in conjunction with the New York State Department of Education, the program allows community-based organizations to participate, in addition to school districts.

**PLEASE NOTE:** Coverage of the 2015 launch of free summer meals distribution is welcome. If you are interested in going to one of the free meals site on Monday for either breakfast or lunch, contact Aaron Lattanzio (see above) will provide locations and contacts.

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