



Summer Food Programs

The Come to the Table Project: People of Faith Relieving Hunger and Supporting Local Agriculture in NC

What is a summer feeding program?

The USDA offers a program to supplement food for schoolchildren in the summer months. The USDA invites churches and other nonprofits to host summer food service program sites. The USDA covers most administrative and food preparation costs and the base prices of the meals.

Why participate in a summer feeding program?

During 2012, nearly 800,000 children in North Carolina were eligible to receive SFSP meals. However, only 16 out of every 100 of them were served. Therefore, the Nutrition Services Branch is making every effort to publicize the program so that more organizations will become program sponsors. Chances are there is a role you can play in making SFSP meals available to hungry children in your community.

How can churches participate?

Large churches may be interested in being sponsor organizations. Sponsors prepare meals and coordinate the sites where children go to eat. Other churches may act as sites. Sites serve meals and provide programming for the children who attend. Churches who are not sponsors or sites can still take part by volunteering to help with cooking, transportation, programming, or filling out the extensive documentation that the programs require. Some churches opt not to participate in the USDA program but still serve lunch to low-income children as part of their summer programs.

How can summer lunch programs link children to local farms?

North Carolina summers bring lots of delicious foods, from sweet potatoes and squash to watermelons and blueberries to pork and chicken. Using food from small farms as part of the USDA program can be challenging because menus must be planned in advance and each meal has a set price. Consider donating church funds to offset the extra cost of buying from local farms, taking gleaning trips, or asking farmers for suggestions on affordable, dependable and nutritious foods.

Since traveling to a church just for lunch is hard for parents, most sites offer a summer program as well as a meal. These programs can include trips to farms, growing summer gardens, simple cooking projects, nutrition education, and more.

For more information:

North Carolina Summer Food Service Program at the Department of Health and Human Services and Division of Public Health: www.nutritionnc.com/snp/sfsp.htm

Growing Minds at the ASAP works to get local foods into schools. Many of its curriculum and farm resources would be helpful in planning a summer food program as well: www.growing-minds.org/teaching-resources/

No Kid Hungry NC (NKH NC) is a private-public partnership to end childhood hunger in the state: www.nc.nokidhungry.org/summer-meals