

Summer Feeding Program

A snapshot from Hickory County, Missouri



Across Missouri, more than 450,000 students receive free and reduced lunch at school. But sometimes, school meals are not enough to address hunger. To ensure children have access to healthy food outside of school, the Hickory County Health Department created a summer feeding program and they invested in an infrastructure that would sustain the program long-term. Because of that preparation, the health department was able to quickly respond to the challenges brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic and immediately help families across Hickory County. Check out this snapshot to learn how the Hickory County Health Department was prepared to support local families in times of need.



Getting Off the Ground

The Hickory County Health Department leveraged resources from multiple grants to create a sustainable summer feeding program. Through their Healthy School Healthy Communities grant, the health department build a pavilion next to the space used for the county's farmer's market. The program started by offering children a hot meal when their family came to the market. Through a No Kid Hungry grant, the health department was able to cover the cost of food preparation and distribution. That's when they started preparing "Supper Snack" bags with five days of milk, fruit, vegetables, protein, and whole grains. The program also helped community members get to know the health department better, learn about other offerings, like the farmer's market, and ultimately, build more trust.

Responding in a Time of Need

When the COVID-19 pandemic hit, the need for healthy food increased. And the community stepped up to help. Schools

served as distribution points and some would even bus the food to family homes. The health department also took food to other community buildings, including churches, that served as "pick-up" sites.



11,395

snacks distributed in April 2020.

Tips to Create the Program

- Go to kids and families. The health department developed a partnership with the local library that hosted a weekly arts and crafts event for kids. By bringing food to the kids, they were able to connect with more families.
- Add fun programming. Try fun activities, like hopscotch, to keep kids engaged. Teach them about the healthy food they are eating and share recipes they can take home.

"We had several returning families and were able to reach some new faces as well, making them all aware of what the Library could offer them and services that the Health Department provides. All in all, very beneficial."

STACY COULSELL, HICKORY COUNTY LIBRARY

"We at the Hickory County Soccer Club have always wanted to introduce our young players to healthy, after-games snacks. And because of the Kids Eat Free program, they were actually given healthier foods. This was so much better than the majority of the sweet snacks they had been getting."

GARY EDWARDS, HICKORY COUNTY SOCCER CLUB



Top Tips from Tammy Parker LPN, Hickory County Health Department

1. **Don't give up.** Look for resources that are out there.
2. **Check out the different areas where you can serve people best.**
Partnerships helped us to branch out to different areas and reach kids in different spots.
3. **Look at your volunteers.** You don't have to do it all yourself.