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Summer Meals program extends reach by hitting the road

Foodlink, RCSD operate Summer Meals vehicles to serve more children

ROCHESTER – How can we reach more children?

That's the perpetual question for those involved with the Summer Meals Partnership of Rochester, a collaborative, city-wide effort to ensure children 18 and younger have access to free, healthy meals while school is out for summer.

This year, the Summer Meals on Wheels initiative helps answer that question. The program meets kids where they naturally congregate (i.e. a library or a playground), and delivers meals in neighborhoods that lack a nearby Summer Meals site. Foodlink and the Rochester City School District both use vehicles to reach a total of nine extra sites – on top of the dozens of regular sites all over town.

“Summer Meals on Wheels is a game-changer that ensures all kids in the City of Rochester who want and need a summer meal have access right in their neighborhood,” said Dina Faticone, Director of Community Health and Engagement at Common Ground Health and co-chair of the partnership. “The partnership is thrilled that Foodlink and the Rochester City School District have stepped forward to bring to scale the successful pilot from Summer 2016.”

Foodlink serves four sites Monday through Friday and has partnered with three other sites that host meals on a rotating basis, once or twice per week. In the first few weeks since the program began July 10, Foodlink has served about 1,500 extra meals – and average of 130 per day. Foodlink's stops include: Conkey Corner Park, Lincoln Library, Arnett Library, Maplewood Library, Lyell Library, Phyllis Wheatley Library, and Susan B. Anthony Park.

“We're so thankful for our partnership with the Rochester Area Community Foundation, which provided the support needed to help formally launch the Summer Meals on Wheels program,” said Terra Keller, Foodlink's Chief Operating Officer and representative for the partnership. “To reach more children, you have to go to them – which is exactly what this program allows us to do.”

Last year, the full Summer Meals program served nearly 400,000 meals at 115 sites. Parents can access the full Summer Meals schedule, and to learn more about the partnership, by visiting: <http://www.summermealsroc.org/>.

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About Foodlink

Foodlink is a regional food hub and the Feeding America food bank serving Allegany, Genesee, Livingston, Monroe, Ontario, Orleans, Seneca, Wayne, Wyoming, and Yates counties. Our operations alleviate food insecurity by distributing food to a network of human service agencies and target the root causes of hunger through our state-of-the-art commercial kitchen and dozens of food-related programs.

Last year, Foodlink distributed 17.4 million pounds of food, including 4.9 million pounds of produce. Foodlink's nutrition educators empower people to make healthy choices and our food access programs provide new access points to nutritious food in underserved communities. Our innovative approach directly addresses diet-related health disparities related to food insecurity. Learn more about our mission to end hunger and to leverage the power of food to build a healthier community at www.foodlinkny.org.

About The Summer Meals Partnership of Rochester

The Summer Meals Partnership is a collaboration among the City of Rochester, the Rochester City School District, Foodlink, the Rochester Area Community Foundation, Common Ground Health and other community partners. The partnership leads year-round efforts to plan, promote, and continuously improve the Rochester Summer Meals experience. The primary purpose of the Summer Meals Partnership is to ensure that every child and youth in the City of Rochester has access to free and healthy summer meals.

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