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Families spend a day at the ballpark learning about Rochester's free Summer Meals program

Annual 'Spring Into Summer' event draws hundreds

ROCHESTER – They danced. They bounced. They played games.

And most importantly, they were well fed.

Rochester children took in the sights of sounds of Frontier Field Saturday – minus the baseball – at the annual “Spring Into Summer: Summer Meals Fest.” The Summer Meals Partnership of Rochester hosts the event at the Red Wings’ stadium each spring to educate parents about how children 18 and younger can access free meals throughout the summer.

Foodlink, the City of Rochester and the Rochester City School District collaborate with community partners such as Common Ground Health and the Rochester Area Community Foundation to organize the event, and allow children to sample various menu items.

“School is almost out, and all of the partners involved in ensuring Rochester children have access to free, healthy meals are gearing up for a successful summer,” said Dina Faticone, Director of Community Health and Engagement for Common Ground Health. “The Summer Meals Fest serves as an important reminder for parents, and a fun day at Frontier Field for the kids.”

Local R-Centers, summer school locations, libraries and other community centers serve as meal sites throughout the summer. The Foodlink Community Kitchen and the Rochester City School district are the two meal vendors that cover more than 100 sites across the city. A large map of the 2019 sites was posted at the stadium Saturday, and parents can call 2-1-1 or visit www.SummerMealsRoc.org to learn more about sites in their neighborhood.

“The health and well-being of our community’s children has long been a top priority for the Community Foundation,” said Jennifer Leonard, President and CEO. “These free and healthy meals provide the fuel they need to enjoy and participate in their summer recreational and learning activities.”

Although the Red Wings were on the road for the weekend, children were able to meet and greet Buffalo Bills second-year defensive tackle Harrison Phillips, who helped promote the Summer Meals program in partnership with the American Dairy Association.

Last year’s Summer Meals program resulted in a total of 338,247 meals served – with an average daily participation rate of more than 5,200 children. The program benefitted from 103 community partners that acted as meal sites.

“Providing children access to nutritious meals is central to our mission,” said Foodlink President & CEO Julia Tedesco. “When school is out, many parents face the financial burden of increased grocery bills. Providing access to free meals give parents assurance that their children are nourished, and able to reach their true potential.”

The start date for Summer Meals sites ranges between June 24 and July 8. For more information about the partnership or a list of sites, visit www.summermealsroc.org or dial 2-1-1.

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About The Summer Meals Partnership of Rochester

The Summer Meals Partnership is 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 in the City of Rochester has access to free and healthy summer meals.