



Summer Food
Service Program
**Best Practice
Guide**



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The Summer Food Best Practice Guide is a tool created to help new and returning Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) sponsors learn how to create a successful program in their community. The sponsors in this guide are happy to share their stories, lessons learned, and recommendations on how to build a successful program. Please do not hesitate to contact the sponsors listed in this guide with any question you have regarding SFSP. They are ready and willing to help!

This guide was created by the Montana Food Bank Network in partnership with Montana No Kid Hungry, Montana Office of Public Instruction, and Montana Team Nutrition. SFSP is administered by the Montana Office of Public Instruction. Contact them by phone at 406.444.2501, or visit http://www.opi.mt.gov/Programs/SchoolPrograms/School_Nutrition/Summer.html. If you have any questions about starting a Summer Food site or the Summer Food Best Practice Guide, call the Montana Food Bank Network at 406.721.3825 or visit our website at www.mfbn.org/summerfood.



Montana
Office of Public Instruction
Denise Juneau, State Superintendent



Volunteers at Hamilton SFSP

Grace Lutheran Church

Hamilton, Ravalli County

Amanda Adams,

Director of Christian Education

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A Word from our Sponsor

Q: How was this Summer Food Service Program Started?

A: One of Grace Lutheran Church's goals is to reach out to and be active in the community, so when they received information about sponsoring a Summer Food program from the Montana Food Bank Network, they thought it would be a great match. They knew that starting a program would help meet the needs of many families in their community, but it wasn't until after starting the program that they realized just how big the need for a summer feeding program was in their community. Rather than have the feeding site at the church building, they chose to have the site at their outpost building—an old log cabin with plenty of yard space and outdoor seating—a couple of blocks away. Summer 2014 was their first year sponsoring the program.

Q: How were meals prepared and what type of food was served?

A: Grace Lutheran decided to hire one of the teachers from their church childcare program to do all the cooking for the site. She prepared the meals in the church kitchen then transported the food to the site to be served. They tried to serve nutritious food that kids might not get at home. Some familiar items like spaghetti and hamburgers were on the menu, but they also served new things such as lemon chicken and pulled pork sandwiches. They also did their best to serve fresh or frozen fruits and veggies. Rather than use a cycle menu, they created a base menu each week and filled in whatever was needed by purchasing what was on sale that week.

Q: What type of outreach was done for this site?

A: Each child within the school district received a handout to take home before the end of the school year. Posters advertising the program were hung around town, and an article about the program ran in the local newspaper. They also designed and purchased banners from vistaprint.com which they hung on the fence along the feeding site. These big and colorful banners caught the attention of many people passing by. The location of the site also helped draw attention to the program. Located near a park and swimming pool, and on a corner of two main roads, the Summer Food site in Hamilton was hard to miss!

Q: How did volunteers get connected with this site?

A: Initially they thought finding volunteers would be the biggest struggle for the summer. They had 31 service days throughout the summer and needed at least three volunteers each day. But with the church congregation available to help and members from other churches in the community willing to volunteer, they were able to fill all the volunteer slots and have a list of back up people! When the volunteers left each day, most had a smile on their face and said they would be happy to come back again.

Sponsor Fast Facts:

Number of sites: 1

*Outdoor or indoor: **Outdoor***

*Meals served: **Lunch (T,W,TH)***

*Activities offered: **yes***

*Number of paid staff: **1***

*Number of volunteers: **Around 50***

*Average Daily Participation: **38***

Q: What types of activities were offered at this site, who led them?

A: Because the outpost building has a great yard space for children to play in, the church decided to purchase rubber balls, hula hoops, cones etc. for the kids to use after eating. They tried to do some organized games but the kids seemed to enjoy doing their own thing more. They also had the county extension agent come for a few weeks of the program. She was able to connect with the kids and play some games while educating them about nutrition.

Q: How was this program received in the community?

A: At the beginning of the summer, three other community organizations/churches let Grace Lutheran Church know they were also concerned about child nutrition during the summer months but did not have the ability to pull off the program on their own. These organizations were pleased that Grace Lutheran Church had the ability to make the program work. They also received many verbal thanks from parents and community members throughout the summer.

Q: What challenges had to be overcome to make this program a success?

A: Knowing how much food to prepare was one of the biggest challenges. The first day they did not know if they would have 20 or 200 people, so they chose to grill burgers and hotdogs on site so that they could prepare some and easily toss on more if needed. They ended up serving 40 kids the first day and the extra food that they did not use was frozen and rescheduled for later in the summer.

Q: Advice to others sponsors?

A: Starting a program seems very daunting and overwhelming since you have no idea how it is going to go. However, if you have the interest of the children in mind and have a way to get the word out then it will work! Be sure to understand all of the paperwork and stay on top of completing it as you go.



Girl at SFSP in Troy

Troy Community Baptist Church

Troy, Lincoln County

Susan Nikolaus

Summer Food Service Manager

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A Word from our Sponsor

Q: How was this Summer Food Service Program Started?

A: The school district in Troy previously sponsored a summer feeding site but dropped the program in 2012. Troy Community Baptist Church saw there was still a need for this type of program so they applied to sponsor a site. The first summer they sponsored a site was 2013.

Q: How were meals prepared and what type of food was served?

A: The church staff met weekly to prepare the menu and discuss their goals for the program. The pastor's wife was in charge of cooking the meals each day with help from one or two other volunteers from the church congregation. The management at the local grocery store was very helpful, informing them of upcoming sales on items they bought often for the program. Most of the food for the program was purchased at the local grocery store.

Q: What type of outreach was done for this site?

A: They informed the elementary and high school before the end of the school year about the program, and sent information home with each kid regarding the time, location, and service days in the school's newsletter. They also ran ads for the program in the local paper, made flyers to post around town, added the announcement to the church's reader board and put up a sign given to them by Montana No Kid Hunger that reads "Kids Eat Here FREE!" on the main road in front of the church building. They also advertised that activities were available after lunch so the kids would not only come for the summer meal but also for a fun day with friends!

Q: How did volunteers get connected with this site?

A: All the volunteers came from the congregation at Troy Community Baptist Church. The volunteers helped cook and clean, as well as lead some structured activities for the children at the feeding site after lunch.

Q: What types of activities were offered at this site, who led them?

A: The youth pastor from the church was appointed to plan and supervise daily activities. Kids under age 10 had the option to stay after lunch and play supervised games or watch movies at the church. The kids over 10 had the option to go on supervised field trips like swimming, hiking, basketball, baseball, and fishing. The church has a 14 passenger van they used to travel between the feeding site to the field trip locations. They also had parents sign permission forms for their children before taking them off-site, and made sure that the information regarding where field trips would take place each day was available in case parents needed to pick up their child before they returned from the field trip. When the kids returned from the afternoon field trip, the SFSP snack was available for them to eat at the church before going home.

Sponsor Fast Facts:

Number of sites: 1

Outdoor or indoor: Indoor

Meals served: Lunch & Snack

Activities offered: Yes

Number of paid staff: 0

Number of volunteers: 5

Average Daily Participation:

Lunch: 30, Snack: 22

Q: How was this program received in the community?

A: One of Troy Community Baptist Church's goals is to be a place where the basic needs of the community are met. Whether it's through the food bank they operate, the game room they open after school and in the summer months, or the extra clothes they have on hand to give to those who need them, this church works hard to let the community know they are a safe place to come. Because the church has already laid the foundation of being such a welcoming organization, it was not hard to get families to trust them and send their kids to the summer feeding site. Parents and kids were grateful for a safe and familiar place where kids could come together eat and have fun.

Q: What challenges had to be overcome to make this program a success?

A: The biggest challenge was predicting the attendance throughout the summer months. Families vacationed, children visited grandparents or parents elsewhere, etc. which made it hard to know how many kids to expect. Having a good relationship with the kids helps alleviate this problem because they are more likely to let you know when they will be out of town.

Q: Advice to others sponsors?

A: It is nice to know that you are making a positive impact on the kids in your community. Learn the names of all the kids in your program and take time to invest in each of them. It is wonderful to know that you had a part in the development of a child's life.



Mobile Food Truck In Browning

Browning School District

Browning, Glacier County

Lynne Keenan

Food Service Manager

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A Word from our Sponsor

Q: How was this Summer Food Service Program Started?

A: Browning was already sponsoring a Summer Food Service Program when Lynne started as the Food Service Manager for the Browning School District. Although Lynne was not involved in starting the program, she is responsible for the significant facelift the program received once she got there. When Lynne started, the program was providing a sack lunch with the same choice of cold sandwiches served every day. Because of the high need and the poverty of the families who came to the feeding sites, Lynne realized they needed to provide more for the kids who relied on the program. They started serving hot meals on a rotating schedule, added breakfast at all the school sites, and even added a summer supper site. The idea for the Mobile Food Truck came when Lynne noticed the school district's concessions truck had been sitting unused, behind her office. She decided that could be a way to add additional Summer Food sites, and reach more kids throughout Browning. Lynne received permission from the school to turn it into a Mobile Food Truck for the summer, beginning in summer 2013. The truck makes four stops around town each day, staying at each stop for an hour to allow kids to eat on-site. These mobile sites are all in neighborhoods that are far from the existing school sites and in areas of very high poverty. Before the food truck came to their neighborhood, the kids who lived in these areas were either unable to access a site or were walking up to two miles, often unattended by adults, to the school feeding sites for meals.

Q: How were meals prepared and what type of food was served?

A: They used the USDA recipes and served a hot lunch almost every day. They also served fresh produce every day in the summer. Most of the feeding sites were at schools with kitchens where members of Lynne's staff were able to prepare the meal before serving the kids in the school cafeteria. The food in the Mobile Food Truck was kept warm in heating units as they traveled around town. Once at a site, an awning was pulled out over the serving window on the side of the truck and a portable picnic table was set up under the awning for the kids to sit at while they ate.

Q: What type of outreach was done for this site?

A: They hung flyers around town, went house to house to let people know about the program, put an ad in the local newspaper, and had the menu read each day on the radio. The Mobile Food Truck also has bright and colorful signs on the outside that helped advertise the program as they drove around town.

Q: How did volunteers get connected with this site?

A: Local churches and members of AmeriCorps serving in Browning often volunteered to lead activities with the kids after meals, but all of the cooking, serving, and cleaning was done by the school kitchen staff.

Sponsor Fast Facts:

Number of sites: 9

Outdoor or indoor: Both

Meals served: Breakfast, Lunch, Supper

Activities offered: Yes

Number of paid staff: 14

Number of volunteers: 10

Average Daily Participation:

Breakfast: 29, Lunch: 305, Supper: 142

Q: What types of activities were offered at this site, who led them?

A: Volunteers led activities such as arts and crafts, reading books, and playing games. There was also a Mobile Library that followed the food truck on its route around town. The Mobile Library followed the truck on Mondays and Fridays allowing kids to check out books. Up to five books were donated for each child to keep.

Q: How was this program received in the community?

A: The program was received well, especially by parents who were very grateful for the help providing healthy food to their kids in the summertime.

Q: What challenges had to be overcome to make this program a success?

A: Knowing how many meals to make at the beginning was a challenge, but after a few years of sponsoring the program predicting the number of meals to make became easier. Getting reliable and consistent staff has been a problem and is something that they are always working on.

Q: Advice to others sponsors?

A: If you are unsure about how much food to prepare, make extra and serve the leftovers the next day along with the planned menu. The kids like having options and choosing what they are going to eat. Many choose to eat the leftovers even if they just had that meal the day before.



Girls eating lunch at the SFSP in Red Lodge

Calvary Episcopal Church

Red Lodge, Carbon County

Rev. Joan Yetter

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A Word from our Sponsor

Q: How was this Summer Food Service Program Started?

A: After receiving a letter from the Montana Food Bank Network introducing them to the idea of starting a SFSP, Calvary Episcopal Church and the Red Lodge Area Community Foundation put together a community meeting to see how the community could come together and start a Summer Food program. Out of the initial meeting, they were able to put together a committee comprised of members from the Red Lodge Area Community Foundation, Calvary Episcopal Church, the local Boys and Girls Club, and the local food bank. The committee then met four times before the start of summer to get all the details in order. Summer 2014 was their first year operating the program.

Q: How were meals prepared and what type of food was served?

A: The cook from the Boys and Girls Club prepared all the food in their kitchen facility, before delivering it to the site. The program was able to use SFSP revenue to cover her wages, which included her time preparing the meals, ordering food, and keeping records. They used a two week menu cycle that included both hot meals and cold sandwiches. Popular meals included macaroni and cheese, tacos, chicken Cesar wraps, sloppy joes, ham/turkey sandwiches, and pasta.

Q: What type of outreach was done for this site?

A: Red Lodge Area Community Foundation used their Facebook page to promote the lunch program and post menus and pictures of the program throughout the summer. The local newspaper and radio station featured the lunch program before and during the summer, and flyers were hung around town to help advertise the program. The Red Lodge Area Community Foundation also chalked the side of their brick building with dates, times, and location of the program, and they had a few sandwich board signs next to the park where the meals were served to catch people as they walked or drove by. The committee also chose to change the name of the program to "Lunch in the Sun" to give the program a more local feel and hopefully attract more people. Next year they are hoping to get a banner and have more PR in the schools before the start of summer.

Q: How did volunteers get connected with this site?

A: Each member of the SFSP steering committee volunteered to serve one day and recruit three other people from their organization to help. They also targeted local groups and asked if they would be willing to volunteer and made volunteering easy and clear so it didn't seem daunting. Some sample groups are: local churches, Fire/EMS, animal groups, environment groups, civic groups, police, groups that deal with kids, the food bank, local businesses, and individuals. With so many volunteers willing to help, Red Lodge Area Community Foundation (who was in charge of scheduling volunteers) was able to schedule a different volunteer group to serve the food each day of the summer!

Sponsor Fast Facts:

Number of sites: 1

*Outdoor or indoor: **Outdoor***
*Meals served: **Lunch (M,W,F)***

*Activities offered: **No***

*Number of paid staff: **1***

*Number of volunteers: **74***

*Average Daily Participation: **23***

Q: What types of activities were offered at this site, who led them?

A: The Fun in the Sun lunch program did not offer any formal activities, but because the location was in a park, many families brought their own activities such as balls, bubbles, games etc.

Q: How was this program received in the community?

A: The program had tremendous support! The kids were excited, the parents were thankful, and the community was proud. Because this was the first year, they did identify areas that could use improvements but everyone understood that the program was volunteer run and organized in a short amount of time. They can definitely count their first year as a success!

Q: What challenges had to be overcome to make this program a success?

A: Their biggest obstacle was not being organized in time to inform kids and parents through the school. They also did not know that the park they planned on using as their site required a permit and fee, which they found out just days before the site was scheduled to start serving meals. Luckily, their town is small and they were able to work around the permit and fee with their Mayor and City Council, and were able to serve lunch in the park as planned.

Q: Advice to others sponsors?

A: Plan ahead and include as many other groups as possible. Bill the program as a free service to ALL kids, emphasizing that you do not need to fill out any applications or forms to participate. You also need a project champion who will commit a lot of time to making the program happen or a paid part-time staff person. Figure out if you need a permit for your serving location and make sure your volunteers are excited and engage with the kids. Build a rapport with the kids and families that attend your lunch –they are the biggest advocates of the program. And have dessert – cookies and Otter Pops go a long way!



FoodCorps member and volunteer serve food at SFSP site.

Kalispell Public Schools

Kalispell, Flathead County

Lorie Hafer

Coordinator

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A Word from our Sponsor

Q: How was this Summer Food Service Program Started?

A: The School Food Service Director, Jenny Montague, first heard of the program when she was approached by Montana No Kid Hungry who suggested that they sponsor a site. Jenny wrote a proposal and presented the idea to the Superintendent. After given the okay to run the program, Jenny and her FoodCorps Service Member conducted outreach to gain community support for the new program throughout the spring and started a SFSP site in 2012.

Q: How were meals prepared and what type of food was served?

A: The menu for the SFSP program is similar to the regular school lunch service menu— both hot and cold menu items were available for breakfast and lunch. Menus were written by the School Food Service Director, emphasizing scratch cooking and local food whenever possible. Local farms supplied fresh lettuce, carrots, peas, cabbage, radishes, cucumbers, tomatoes, herbs, and strawberries. A local meat processor supplied local polish dogs, breakfast links and beef patties. The meals were prepared at a central kitchen then distributed to the SFSP sites around town. During the summer months, the kitchen staff for the SFSP consists of a small number of the School Food Service Staff from the school year, volunteers and a FoodCorps Service Member.

Q: What type of outreach was done for this site?

A: Outreach for the site included hanging posters around town, handing out flyers, putting an ad in the newspaper, and on the radio, and word of mouth. They found that the most effective outreach was the ad that ran on the local radio and canvassing the neighborhood with flyers about the program.

Q: How did volunteers get connected with this site?

A: Lorie Hafer, the Program Manager was in charge of recruiting volunteers. They acquired most volunteers by reaching out to several community groups, such as the Retired Senior Volunteer Program and the Girls Scouts. They also gathered some volunteers after participating in a radio interview. The FoodCorps Service Member attended several community action groups and events to speak about the program and to request volunteers. They also partnered with a local nonprofit, The Center for Restorative Youth Justice, and took on volunteers from the local therapeutic boarding school, Montana Academy.

Sponsor Fast Facts:

Number of sites: **4**

Outdoor or indoor: **Both**

Meals served: **Breakfast, Lunch**

Activities offered: **Yes**

Number of paid staff: **9 (including 1 FoodCorps Member)**

Number of volunteers: **Around 12**

Average Daily Participation:

Breakfast: 49, Lunch: 173

Q: What types of activities were offered at this site, who led them?

A: They hosted a Summer Kickoff Barbecue for kids and families at the beginning of the summer, as well as held regular programming at each site. Grant money helped them purchase games and toys (jump ropes, bubbles, and balls etc.) that kids could play with on their own. Volunteers from the Montana Academy, Girl Scouts and The Center for Restorative youth Justice led games and activities a few days a week. Lorie Hafer also organized a theme each weeks, such as hat week, water week, outdoor week etc. that encouraged participants to bring related costumes, games, and answer quiz questions for prizes.

Q: How was this program received in the community?

A: In general, the program was very well received. Initially, they did field questions from community members about the need for a Summer Food Program. They explained that the program ensures that all children have access to nutritious foods needed to return to school well-fed and ready to learn. Many parents and community members commended the program and the menu for the diversity of foods and the quality of freshness. Kalispell Public Schools partnered with many local farmers and ranchers to serve a high percentage of local food to serve during the summer months.

Q: What challenges had to be overcome to make this program a success?

A: Finding a central location within walking distance for children and near lower income areas was a challenge. They dealt with this problem by being willing to change the locations for the feeding sites from one year to the next as they find a location that better suits their needs. They have also found that since children seem to trickle in at different times it is difficult to provide games and programming for the duration of the meal time. Having games and books available for children to play with themselves or each other seemed to be a good solution. Attendance also seemed to be a bit unpredictable, and depended greatly on the weather, family vacations, other local attractions etc. which can affect whether they prepared too much or not enough meals on a given day.

Q: Advice to others sponsors?

A: Assessing the needs of your community and fitting your SFSP program to your community seems to be a key to success. Serving meals that are kids' summer favorites, like hot dogs and hamburgers and fresh fruit, but making healthy twists (like whole grain rolls and local meat) pleases everyone. The summer is a great time to get the highest quality local produce, so partner with local farmers, or join a Community Supported Agriculture program to incorporate an abundance and variety of produce into your menu. The summer months are also a great time to utilize school garden produce. You can serve meals from the garden and also engage the kids by having them help in the garden before/after they eat. Reach out to your local Parks and Rec to see if partnering with them to have a site at one of their summer camp locations is an option.