

PRESS RELEASE
06/29/2010

For Immediate Release

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Nebraska Reaching Only One in Ten Low-Income Children with Summer Nutrition Programs

Lincoln, NE - As the national recession left families reeling, only one in ten low-income children in Nebraska had access to summer meals in 2009 according to [*Hunger Doesn't Take a Vacation*](#), an annual analysis by the Food Research and Action Center (FRAC) released today. Nationally, about one in six low-income children received summer meals.

The Summer Food Service Program provides essential meals to low-income kids, ensuring kids have access to quality nutritious foods while also drawing children into educational and recreational activities during the summer. However, only 9,831 low-income children participated daily in summer nutrition programs in Nebraska in July 2009. This is staggering when compared to the 98,816 low-income Nebraska children who received free or reduced price school lunches during the regular school year.

"Summer Nutrition programs are not working as well as they could to serve Nebraska children, in part due to burdensome paperwork and federal eligibility requirements which have prevented Nebraska school districts and nonprofit providers from serving more low-income children. Fortunately, there is an opportunity to make federal changes to decrease these barriers. We urge our Congressional leaders to take action on the current Child Nutrition Reauthorization legislation to help Nebraska feed more hungry kids during the summer" stated Rebecca Gould, Executive Director at Nebraska Appleseed.

Too many Nebraska children are facing hunger this summer, even though Nebraska did offer more summer food sites in 2010 - 225 (compared to 101 in the summer of 2009). If the state's programs were to reach just 40% of low-income children who access free and reduced price school lunch, a goal other states reach, Nebraska would feed 29,696 more children and bring in \$2,044,865 more federal dollars.

"Demand for free and reduced price school lunch has increased nearly 4% over the last year. The time is now to improve access to summer nutrition programs to meet increased need and allow Nebraska to put federal dollars to work for our kids" states Gould.

Congress is currently working on reauthorizing all of the federal child nutrition programs, including the Summer Nutrition Programs, and key leaders have proposed a significant increase in funding.

Nebraska Appleseed joins FRAC in calling for Congress to invest new dollars into expanding the reach of the Summer Nutrition Programs. In its national report, FRAC made the following recommendations:

- Improving the program's too-narrow area eligibility test so that children from low-income families in a broader range of poor communities are able to participate;
- Expanding to all states the Year-Round Summer Food Pilot, currently only in effect in California, which reduces paperwork and eases administrative requirements for community-based sponsors that serve children during both the summer and after school during the school year;
- Providing grants to sponsors for start-up and expansion costs and transportation of children in order to bring new sponsors into the program and allow existing sponsors to serve more children; and
- Improving reimbursement rates so that schools, local government agencies, and private nonprofit organizations are able to operate the program without losing money and can provide healthier food.

"Increased funding for child nutrition programs would ensure that more low-income children have access to summer meals that stave off hunger, help reduce obesity, and draw children into educational and enrichment programs that keep them learning throughout the summer," said Jim Weill, president of FRAC. "The Summer Nutrition Programs have an important role, but they are clearly in trouble and must be improved."

The Summer Nutrition Programs, which include the Summer Food Service Program and the National School Lunch Program, should be filling the food gap for the tens of thousands of Nebraska children who rely on school breakfast and lunch during the school year to help keep hunger at bay. Through these programs, children aged 18 and under can receive free meals at participating schools, parks, other public agencies, and nonprofits. In Nebraska, families can find nearby summer meal sites by calling the Nebraska Department of Education Nutrition Services Department at (800) 731-2233 or accessing their website: http://www.nde.state.ne.us/ns/sfsp/sfsp_sponsors.htm.

About the report:

Data for Nebraska came from an annual report released by the Food Research and Action Center (FRAC), a national anti-hunger advocacy and research group. The FRAC report, [*Hunger Doesn't Take A Vacation*](#), gives data for all states and looks at national trends. The report measures participation in the Summer Nutrition Programs by comparing the number of low-income children receiving summer meals to the number of low-income children receiving school lunch during the regular school year. FRAC measures national summer participation during the month of July, when typically all children are out of school throughout the month and lose access to school meals. The report is available online at www.frac.org.

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Nebraska Appleseed, a nonprofit, nonpartisan public interest law project, is a national leader in addressing social problems facing vulnerable children without loving and permanent homes, low-income families working hard to make ends meet, and new immigrants seeking a better life. Nebraska Appleseed's current year action plan and description of its six program areas, significant litigation and policy reform successes, and broad-based accomplishments can be found at neappleseed.org.

Nebraska Appleseed is a part of the Appleseed network of independent state-based public interest law centers working to identify and address social injustices. The Appleseed network seeks to build a just society through education, legal advocacy, community activism and policy

expertise by addressing root causes and producing practical, systemic solutions with broad implication. For more information visit appleseednetwork.org.

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