

Kids Cafe Program

The Kids Cafe program is one of the nation's largest charitable meal service programs, providing free, prepared food and nutrition education to hungry children. It's a comprehensive approach to ending childhood hunger through after-school programs initiated by America's Second Harvest—the Nation's Food Bank Network. The program is administered locally by the Food Bank of Central & Eastern North Carolina for children ages 18 and under. Our programs are presented in collaboration with Blue Cross and Blue Shield of North Carolina. One of the primary strengths to the program is its flexibility. Poverty and hunger manifest differently in each community, requiring a community-based approach.

GOAL

The goal of the Kids Cafe program is to provide children, who are at risk of hunger, access to nutritious meals in addition to academic and health education in a safe, well-supervised and easily accessed environment.

CORE COMPONENTS & OBJECTIVES

The Food Bank has established the following core components to engage not only the children in the program but also their parents.

- **Academic Enrichment:** to maintain or increase academic performance in a minimum of 75% of program participants and to foster a positive attitude toward school and academic subjects.
- **Mentoring:** to provide support, direction, and encouragement to children in both academic and social activities by providing one-on-one interaction with students and to support the social interaction of children using group activities while also seeking to improve self-esteem.
- **Nutrition Education:** to hold monthly nutrition education activities which educate children on the importance of healthy eating and its positive effects and to encourage healthy eating habits of children both during and outside of the program.
- **Nutritious Meals:** to provide a meal based on USDA guidelines to every program each day.
- **Physical Activity:** to provide monthly opportunities for children to have a structured and safe environment to play using the Be Active North Carolina curriculum and to foster an increased understanding of the importance of an active lifestyle.
- **Parental Empowerment:** to provide a system of support that would provide parents with resources to support their child's academic and health potential—as well as their own—by distributing the quarterly publication, PARTNERSHIP: A Parent's Resource.

HISTORY AND GROWTH

The Food Bank's first Kids Cafe program was initiated in February 1999 through a joint partnership between the Food Bank, Avent Ferry United Methodist Church and Western Boulevard Presbyterian Church. This partnership provided 30 children with nutrition and academic support. Today we have 20 Kids Cafe programs in the following 18 counties: Columbus, Craven, Duplin, Durham, Halifax, Jones, Lee, Lenoir, Moore, New Hanover, Orange, Pender, Pitt, Richmond, Scotland, Vance, Wake, and Wilson Counties. From July 2005 through June 2006, the Food Bank's Kids Cafe programs have served over 83,600 meals and received over 10,800 hours of volunteer support. The Food Bank's programs serves approximately 860 children per week.

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In partnership with the Food Bank of Central & Eastern North Carolina

continued

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HUNGER

According to the National Hunger Study Report conducted by America's Second Harvest, more than 400,000 people are at risk of hunger and are at or below the federal poverty guideline in the 34 counties the Food Bank serves. Nearly 30% of the people we serve are children, 18% are elderly, and 38% of households have one or more working adults.

RESEARCH

In 2006, a research study evaluating the program's impact conducted by Dr. Jocelyn D. Taliaferro of North Carolina State University's Social Work Department found that children who participate in Kids Cafe reported being promoted to the next grade and being enthusiastic about the effects of the program's academic effects.

Program Director Results:

- 85% of directors had some college experience with degrees in business, education, physical education, and social work.
- 70% of children at each site received free or reduced lunch.
- 100% of sites reported that they serve meals based on USDA's Child and Adult Food Care Program

Comment: "The partnership with the Food Bank and Kids Cafe allows our agency to fill those gaps in services that exist amongst our children in a needy community. It has truly been a valuable resource."

Participant Results:

- 48% of participants are girls and 52% are boys.
- 83% reported being taught about the food pyramid.
- 97% acknowledged that healthy food makes their body strong and gives them energy.
- 85% reported learning about healthy food choices.

Comment: "I get to eat good, healthy food."

Parent Results:

- 86% reported improvements in student's self-confidence.
- 85% reported improvement in student's overall happiness.
- 97% felt the Kids Cafe was a safe place for their children after-school.
- 93% felt the program promoted appropriate social interaction.
- 95% felt like the program encouraged children to interact with other cultures and races.

Comment: "The program is a very good program with concerned workers. They make sure that the kids eat good meals which helps out a lot."

FUNDING

Recognizing that good nutrition is key to the health and development of children, Blue Cross and Blue Shield of North Carolina has partnered with the Food Bank to expand the Kids Cafe program throughout our 34-county service area. The grant will assist us in providing food at each Kids Cafe program, including fresh fruits and vegetables, meat and dairy products.

HOW TO GET STARTED

Organizations interested in launching a Kids Cafe program should contact our Outreach, Evaluations & Programs Manager at (919) 865-3037 or visit our website.

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