

# Food Bank expands summer food program for youths

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The Food Bank of Central & Eastern North Carolina has doubled the number of locations where it supports a summer program that provides food to low-income children.

The federal [Summer Food Service Program](#) provides the children with breakfast and lunch when school isn't in session, but North Carolina officials estimate that the program is reaching only 8 percent of the 700,000 students statewide who qualify.

"We have many children in our state that get free and reduced-price meals during the school (year), and this is our opportunity to continue that good nutrition when school is out," said Cynthia Ervin, summer food service coordinator for the state Division of Public Health.

Ervin said she is trying to get the word out about the program.

"The more meals we serve, the more funding we get for the sponsors, and therefore, the more federal funding that can be brought into the state," she said.

Next week, the Food Bank will begin Kids Summer Stock, a series of concerts and events to collect food and money for the summer program. A June 3 mixer will be held in Raleigh, followed by concerts in Southern Pines and Durham the next two nights. Events in Cary, Greenville and Wilmington will be held later in the month.

Food Bank spokeswoman Christy Simmons said the Summer Food Service Program is critical for children who receive meals at school for much of the year, which is why the pantry has expanded its reach to 32 programs.

"It's another way to make sure all these thousands of children who are at risk of hunger during the summer have a way to receive nutritious meals," Simmons said.

Jaquilla Suell, 11, is among those children. She attends summer camps at Homework Haven and Kids Cafe in Raleigh, which is part of the nutrition program. Before the camps joined the program, she and other students had to bring their own lunches.

"They might have a can of pork and beans, and that's it," said Joni Craven-Jeffries, after-school and summer camp director at Homework Haven and Kids Cafe. "Some of them might not have a meal."

The nutrition program provides youths with a sandwich, side items like applesauce and raisins, fresh fruit and milk as a typical lunch.



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