



End Hunger Connecticut! and Community Partners Gather with Volunteers to Raise Awareness About Free Summer Meals for Kids and Teens in New Haven and Hamden, CT

East Hartford, Conn. – June 23rd, 2022 - End Hunger Connecticut! (EHC!), New Haven and Hamden Public Schools, United Way of Greater New Haven, and community partners will join together in New Haven on Saturday, June 25th, 2022 to spread the word about free summer meals to community members throughout New Haven and Hamden, CT.

This summer marks the return of summer meals “Blitz” events, in which End Hunger CT! works with community partners and volunteers in communities across Connecticut to canvass neighborhoods near summer meals site and raise awareness about the program. This Saturday, volunteers will gather at the newly renovated Dixwell Community House in New Haven to participate in a kick-off rally then disperse into teams to distribute outreach materials in New Haven and Hamden neighborhoods.

Volunteers are raising awareness about the Summer Food Nutrition Program (SFSP), a child nutrition program funded by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), which provides meals and snacks to children and teens during the summer months at no-cost to their families. In CT, the program is administered by the CT State Department of Education (CSDE) and promoted as the Free CT Summer Meals Program.

According to the Food Research and Action Center (FRAC), “When school lets out, millions of low-income children lose access to the school breakfasts, lunches and afterschool snacks and meals they receive during the regular school year. The Summer Nutrition Programs help fill this gap by providing free meals and snacks to children who might otherwise go hungry.”

“We’re excited to relaunch our summer meals blitz events. In the past, in-person outreach events have been key to informing families about summer meals sites. These are wonderful community events, and we love working with volunteers from across the state,” stated Julieth Callejas, End Hunger Connecticut!’s Executive Director. Callejas continued, “We’re also grateful to have the support of community partners and sponsors like Hamden and New Haven Public Schools, who continue to champion the importance of child nutrition programs.”

"No kid should ever go hungry in this country. No parent should have to agonize over where their child’s next meal will come from. This summer, in New Haven and Hamden, there are free and nutritious meals and snacks for kids 18 years of age and younger. All summer long," affirmed Matt Wilcox, Vice President of the New Haven Board of Education.

Jody Goeler, Hamden’s Superintendent added, “For children who rely on school breakfast and lunch during the school year, the summer presents a potential gap in meeting their nutritional needs, putting them at risk. This is why the summer meals program is so crucial. Good nutrition is foundational to a child’s health, development, and learning, and should be equally accessible to all. Summer meals are free, and no registration or paperwork are required. We want to spread the word about summer meals to ensure that every child can get the nutritious meals they need during the summer when school is out, a time when hunger issues are exacerbated.”

According to the USDA, “SFSP provided meals to 4.7 million children each day across more than 37,000 sites in July of 2020 [nationwide]. Overall, in FY 2020, the SFSP served about 1.3 billion meals and snacks...The program expanded rapidly in the early months of the pandemic, serving about 564.4 million meals from March through May 2020. Comparatively, only 1.2 million meals were served over the same period in 2019.”

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“We are still seeing the residual effects of the pandemic in our state as families continue to struggle with food insecurity. The last two years have proven that school and summer meals are vital to ensuring children have access to the nutrition they need to thrive. Families need to know that help is available for them during the summer months – which is often the hungriest time of year for children,” said Callejas.

“We are mobilizing our communities and neighbors to help promote greater awareness of summer meals,” shared Aly Fox, VP for Community Impact at United Way of Greater New Haven. “Everyone can get involved in the movement to end childhood hunger – join us and volunteer for the “Blitz” canvassing event in New Haven and Hamden this Saturday, June 25th.” To register to volunteer and learn more please visit, [United Way of Greater New Haven’s Week of Action website](#).

The Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) is administered at the federal level by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), and in each state through the department of education, agriculture, or health. In Connecticut, the program is administered by the State Department of Education (CSDE). End Hunger CT! promotes the CT Summer Meals Program in partnership with CSDE. Meals sites are individually operated by summer meals sponsors. Please confirm your site’s details as meal site locations, meals, and times vary. To find the closest summer meals site near you, visit www.CTSummerMeals.org, call 211, or text the word “Food” to 304-304. Families can also follow @CTSummerMeals on social media for more information about the CT Summer Meals Program.

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End Hunger Connecticut! is a statewide anti-hunger and food security organization. By focusing on advocacy, outreach, education, and research, EHC! serves as a comprehensive anti-hunger resource for policymakers, community organizations, and low-income families. Our mission is to end hunger in Connecticut through legislative and administrative advocacy, outreach, and public education. EHC! is committed to providing and sustaining a culture of safety, offering clear expectations and a non-judgmental environment rooted in integrity, reliability, and generosity in the workplace. Learn more about EHC!’s work at www.endhungerct.org and on all social media platforms (@endhungerct).

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