

Genesee County Community Action Resource Department

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### **Genesee County Community Action Resource Department Kicks Off Summer Meals In Genesee County**

Flint, MI- For many kids, summer vacation comes with a thrill of anticipation. Weeks stretch ahead filled with dreams of bike rides, swimming pools and family vacations. However, for many families struggling to put food on the table, the end of school means the end of free or reduced price school meals and the start of worry, anxiety and the threat of hunger.

GCCARD is providing children will access to nutritious meals all summer long through their summer Meet Up & Eat Up program through the Michigan Department of Education. We are sponsoring nearly 65 sites starting June 19<sup>th</sup> until September 1<sup>st</sup>, 2017 where children can receive at least 2 meals each day they attend the site of their choice. Not only can children receive nutritious meals, but they can participate in a wide-variety of activities hosted by the sites as well. Our summer menus consist of items like hamburgers, pizzas, mac & cheese and a variety of sandwiches. All meals offer sides of fresh fruits and vegetables that have been chosen to focus on lead-mitigation, along with ice cold milk. According to Tamitha Taylor, Director of Nutrition Services, "Hunger doesn't take a vacation and neither do we."

The United States Department of Agriculture's Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) was created over forty years ago to help students get nourishment when school is out of session. Under the current program, federally reimbursed meals are available to kids at sites around the country, including schools, faith-based programs and community centers. This program is a lifeline for kids in need.

Unfortunately, barriers like extreme weather, transportation challenges and excessive red tape, however, block many kids from getting the meals they need. To conquer these challenges, we are serving children right in their neighborhoods.

"We know the impact summer hunger can have on children and families. When school meals disappear, kids experience anxiety and uncertainty and family budgets are stretched even further," said Duke Storen, senior director of research, advocacy and partner development at Share Our Strength. "The summer meals program provides a critical resource to these children, but far too many kids are missing out on the chance to have a healthy meal every day."

To get the program started, GCCARD is hosting a Kick-Off event Saturday, June 10<sup>th</sup> from 11-3pm. The event will be held at Kearsley Park in conjunction with the City of Flint and other local partners. There, children and their parents can participate in games, demos and meet some of the organizations that will be hosting sites this summer. In addition, there will be a bike raffle sponsored by Molina Healthcare & other partners. **Lunch will be provided.**

Background Information on Summer Meals Program in Genesee County:

- Meals are FREE to children and teens age 18 and younger who come to a summer meals site
- Food served follows USDA nutrition guidelines and is paid for by the USDA
- Summer meals sites are at schools, churches, community centers, parks and other places that are safe for kids and teens
- Parents don't need to apply to the program to get a free summer meal for their kids. They can just bring their child to a summer meals site in their community.

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