



## NEWS RELEASE

June 14, 2018

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### **Summer Meals Help Bridge the Gap**

*Summer Food Service Program offers nutritious meals to combat childhood hunger*

(Salem, Ore.) – When school lets out for the summer, thousands of Oregon children lose access to breakfast, lunch and afterschool meals that are available during the regular school year. Many children and families rely on these school meals to supplement what is available at home. The Summer Food Service Program helps to fill this gap by providing free, nutritious meals to children and teens over the summer months. Free meals and enrichment activities are [offered at participating summer sites](#) including many schools, parks and other non-profit organizations.

The program is currently underutilized with many families unaware of the free meals and activities in their communities. Nationally, only one out of six children who receive free or reduced price meals during the school year continue to receive meals during the summer months. Increasing awareness of and access to these programs can have a significant impact on combating childhood food insecurity.

“We know the important role that child nutrition plays during the school year and it’s just as crucial in the summer months when children don’t have access to school meals,” Colt Gill, Director of the Oregon Department of Education, said. “We encourage families and caregivers to take advantage of this opportunity to help ensure the children they care for have access to good nutrition over the summer.”

Families can look up meal locations in their area by calling 2-1-1, or texting “Food” or “Comida” to 877-877, or visiting [the Summer Food Oregon website](#). Meals are available for any child 18 and under without regard to race, color, national origin, sex, age or disability.

“The Summer Foods Lunch Program in Klamath Falls allows us to provide lunches to kids who would otherwise go hungry,” Integral Youth Services Outreach Programs Director Craig Schuhmann said. “Over the course of the summer we serve 24,000 lunches at 30 different sites, rural and city, over a ten week period. This affords us the opportunity to combine our efforts with local community partners to provide education and enrichment activities while the youth are gathered to eat. Many appreciative parents have told us that this program helps to stretch an already tight food budget.”

We invite community partners, school districts and media partners to help spread the word about the free summer meals and activities to families in your area. Follow Summer Meals Oregon on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#) and share their message often!



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*Oregon achieves . . . together!*

**Colt Gill**

Director of the Oregon Department of Education

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Want to learn more? Resources for summer meals include:

[Summer Food Oregon- Marketing Resources](#)

[USDA- Summer Meal Toolkit](#)

[USDA- Raise Awareness](#)

[No Kid Hungry- Summer Meals](#)

If you have questions, please contact ODE Community Nutrition Manager Lynne Reinoso at (503) 947-5892 or [lynne.reinoso@state.or.us](mailto:lynne.reinoso@state.or.us).

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