

## Summer Eats Minnesota

### Mobile App Building Momentum

**Minneapolis, Minnesota**—Come summertime, free nutritious meals for kids can be as easy as a click away. The Summer Eats Minnesota mobile app is in its third summer and gaining momentum, with more than 5,300 downloads and over 1,000 visits this week. Hunger Impact Partners, a Minnesota-based nonprofit, created the mobile app with Minneapolis and St. Paul Public School Districts and the Minnesota Department of Education to help kids and families locate free meals when school is not in session.



The app, called Summer Eats Minnesota, is free at the Apple App Store and the Google Play Store. Powered by GPS, it shows locations of summer food sites, typical menus and days and hours of operation. Kids up to age 18 can show up without prior sign-up for free meals at these open site locations, including park and recreation sites, community centers, libraries and schools. The app shows the distance and directions to the nearest sites, including food truck stops. It also lists sites that provide meals for toddlers.

“If kids can get healthy meals during the summer, they can go back to school ready to learn,” said Ellie Lucas, CEO of Hunger Impact Partners. “App usage is growing and continues to be the most convenient way to find free summer meals. We hope everyone – both children and adults – will download Summer Eats Minnesota, share it with others so it can be a valuable resource in communities across the state. The number and reach of summer meal sites have expanded in recent years. We now have 162 organizations operating more than 675 free feeding sites that do not require sign-up. That’s a big increase from 2008 when there were only 103 sponsors and 403 sites.”

“Hunger does not take a vacation in the summer. Knowing where to find a healthy meal is so crucial for so many of our families and students while school is out,” said Bertrand Weber, Culinary and Wellness Services Director of Minneapolis Public Schools. “The summer menu is designed to provide a healthy blend of kids’ favorites that incorporate whole grains, lean proteins, fruits, vegetables and milk.”

Pew Research Center reported that 93 percent of U.S. residents own a smartphone, with a sharp uptick recently among teens and low-income families. “Smartphones serve as the computer in many households,” Lucas said. “They are more affordable and are quickly becoming the main device for accessing the internet.”

Minnesota ranks 16<sup>th</sup> among 50 states in feeding children in the summer, with only 20 percent of school-age kids participating in the federally reimbursed Summer Food Service Program



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(SFSP). SFSP is a U.S. Department of Agriculture program administered by the state Department of Education. It reimburses food providers who serve healthy meals to children and teens in low-income areas in the summer.

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**About Hunger Impact Partners**

Hunger Impact Partners, a 501c3, works to change the trajectory of child hunger by improving access to and participation in under-utilized federal child nutrition programs for the 479,805 eligible Minnesota kids. Experts in hunger-relief, data analysis, community collaboration and policy solutions, the organization focuses on closing the meal gap for all low-income children birth to 18 so they can reach their full potential.

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