

Community Partners for a Healthier Virginia!

Public Schools Recognized for their Student Meal Program Efforts

The Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) was created by the USDA so that children who normally receive free/reduced meals at school continue to receive healthy meals during the summer break. Free meals that meet Federal nutrition guidelines are provided to all children 18 years old and under at approved sites.



Each year the USDA selects 2-3 individuals or organizations from each state that have championed the cause for SFSP and to end childhood hunger. This year, Norfolk Public Schools, Giles County Public Schools and Rudy Ward, activities director at Highland Springs H.S., Henrico County Public Schools, were selected.

- During their first year of operations (2012), Norfolk Public Schools was the fourth largest sponsor in the state. In 2013, they continued to increase the reach of its program to needy children, serving as the second largest sponsor with 54 feeding sites. An outstanding effort!
- Giles County Public Schools solved SFSP-related challenges in a very innovative way that has now been endorsed by the USDA. Since meals must be served in a congregate setting, finding places that children can easily travel to is an issue in rural areas. By charging adults a very small fee to cover the cost of food, parents were able to bring their children to Narrows High School for a family meal, where the children ate for free. Businesses and churches donated funds to let others (like seniors) eat free as well. This had a significant impact on reducing hunger in Giles County.
- Mr. Ward worked tirelessly to initiate a very successful site at Highland Springs H.S., but his concern for feeding hungry children spread throughout the Commonwealth. With his contacts within the metro region and across the entire Commonwealth, numerous additional school sites were added in 2013 and continue to be added for the summer of 2014.

SFSP sponsors can be a school, camp, governmental entity, private non-profit organization, or a college participating in the National Youth Sports Program. The deadline to apply to become a sponsor this year is April 25th, 2014. For more information on how to become a sponsor, visit <http://www.vahealth.org/dcn/General%20Info/sfsp.htm>. For more information on SFSP, visit <http://www.fns.usda.gov/sfsp/summer-food-service-program-sfsp>.