

Summer lunch program at Eminence in the state spotlight

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EMINENCE

Since Indiana Summer Food Service Program sponsors represent a wide variety of organizations and communities, we wanted to highlight this time some SFSP achievements that came in "small packages." Nonetheless, these made a great impact in many lives they touched.

Eminence Community Schools

Eminence is a small community in northwest Morgan County with a population of approximately 3,000 people. Total enrollment for the entire school corporation is about 425 students. With the support of the Superintendent and school board, Food Service Director Chris Wheeler decided this was a good time to start operating the Summer Food Service Program.

At the conclusion of its SFSP operations, the school was very pleased with the participation they experienced during their first year on the program, serving 642 meals in the 19 days they operated. The school was also serving meals for two weeks with no planned activities in the building, followed with the summer school classes for the high school students. Participation was relatively steady all four weeks although the attendance was a bit higher during the weeks of summer school.

To advertise the free summer meals program, Wheeler advertised in the local newspaper and on the radio, utilized the school message system, hung up fliers in the local businesses and put up yard signs in the school yard.

According to Wheeler, her biggest challenge this summer was the unknown — the fear of not having anyone show up or not having enough food prepared for those who did show up. When asked what she was most pleased with, Wheeler responded, "We were proud that we had the same families come back each day. Often times, we had adults in our community stop in for lunch, too. It was nice to have that "social time" for an hour for people in the community."

Wheeler also received donations from community partners to pay for adult meals for those who could not afford it or didn't have money for their meal. Additionally, the local chapter of the Future Farmers of America (FFA) offered vegetables grown in their garden which were incorporated into the SFSP menu. This community partnership was yet another way to give students some additional ownership in the program.

Next year, Wheeler plans to incorporate with the SFSP some free activities such as reading time and crafts and invite different community organizations to come in and talk with students.

Wheeler and her staff are congratulated for cultivating interest and participation from the entire Eminence community to support this important feeding program.