

## **Fresh, Nutritious, Family-Style Summer Meals: Foodlink, Rochester, New York**

*Foodlink, the food bank serving Central and Western New York, makes nutrition quality its highest priority in the SFSP. Their summer food sites meet FRAC's Summer Food Standards of Excellence "gold" criteria. Foodlink's kitchen, called Freshwise, produces high quality summer meals through a focus on skilled labor, which allows them to turn less expensive basic products into delicious, from-scratch meals, while staying within the parameters of SFSP reimbursement. Foodlink has been a summer food sponsor for over eight years. It currently provides summer meals to over 53 sites throughout the city of Rochester, NY.*

### **Focus on Nutritional Quality**

All of the fruits and vegetables in Foodlink's summer meals are fresh, and most are locally-grown. More than 50 percent of the grains offered are whole, and only low-fat white milk is served. A variety of meats are offered through the week, with one day per week being a vegetarian dish. The ground beef served is from locally raised grass-fed cows, and while it is more expensive than typical beef, the cook notes that less "cooks out" so a higher volume of usable meat remains after cooking.

### **Building Community through Family-Style Meal Service**

Hot meals are delivered to the sites every day in large pans, and then served family-style. This type of delivery and meal service helps keep food at the correct temperature, while reducing packaging and waste. Children help to serve the meals, and are trained to follow all site safety regulations. According to Debbie Holden, Freshwise Site Coordinator, making children a part of the meal service builds a sense of ownership and community at the sites. The children clamor for the privilege of the day's serving responsibilities.

### **Introducing New Foods, Taste Testing, and Nutrition Education**

On an ongoing basis, Foodlink encourages children at its summer food sites to try new foods, including different types of fruits and vegetables. They revise their menus each season, and hold taste testing events with the children to gather input. This summer, in addition to meals, Foodlink will send a nutrition educator to its summer food sites around the city, furthering its mission of providing food, nutrition, education and resources to at-risk communities.

### **Social Enterprise & Marketing Enhances Summer Food**

Freshwise prepares all the meals for its Summer Food program. It is also a social enterprise of the food bank and includes a catering operation for community events as well as a hydroponic farm.

For more on Foodlink and Freshwise summer food, visit: <http://www.freshwise.org> and [http://www.foodlinkny.org/programs\\_kidsafe.aspx](http://www.foodlinkny.org/programs_kidsafe.aspx)

## **Making Summer Food into Summer Fun for Children and Families: Thompson Ecumenical Empowerment Group (TEEG), Thompson, CT**

*Thompson Ecumenical Empowerment Group (TEEG) in Thompson, Connecticut, achieves FRAC's Summer Food Standards of Excellence "silver" level. TEEG is a small community-based non-profit which began sponsoring the summer food program five years ago. This summer food site provides valuable nutrition and a positive place for children in the community to spend time during the summer. Each year, they successfully increase the number of children attending their site, the activities available at the site throughout the summer, and the nutritional quality of the food served.*

### **Simple, Kid-Friendly, Nutritious Summer Meals**

As a "self prep" sponsor, Thompson Ecumenical Empowerment Group prepares its own meals. Their menus vary from week to week and incorporate a variety of nutritious yet kid-friendly menu items, including Chef's and Chicken Caesar salads. Fresh fruits and vegetables are often offered. They frequently provide healthier versions of food items, such as BLTs made with turkey bacon on whole wheat bread.

### **Outreach and Activities**

Outreach and expanding participation are key focuses of TEEG's efforts. This summer, in order to attract more children to the site, they are moving the site location from a housing authority to a concession stand area halfway between the housing authority and a ballpark. They provide activities for children at their site, supported in part by an End Hunger Connecticut! grant. The grant funding from the state anti-hunger organization as well as tapping into community resources, such as Thompson Recreation Department, the local librarian, and University of Connecticut nursing students and recruiting a local pastor to lead craft activities strengthens the program.

### **Parent Involvement**

Parents are welcome and participate in TEEG summer programming. Serving as "community spokespeople" for the site, parents help get the word out about the site and encourage other parents and children to attend. While currently the summer food program only allows for meals to be served to children, TEEG hopes to secure private funding to serve parent meals.

### **Closing the Hunger Gap: 10-Week Summer Food Program**

TEEG is committed to ensuring that there are no gaps in meal availability for the children they serve. Unlike many summer food programs that leave at least a one week gap between summer meal availability and the school calendar, TEEG runs a 10-week program so that children in their community do not miss a day of nutrition.

For more on TEEG's program, visit: <http://www.teegonline.org/yp-summer-lunch.html>