

Local Program Helps Feed Youth During the Summer

Summer food program helps families

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ROCKFORD - This summer, kids and teens won't need to worry about where their next meal will be coming from. It's all thanks to a local program that serves lunches, dinners or snacks throughout the community.

School is out and summer is here. But, for some that could also mean a stressful time for families who struggle to put food on the table for every meal. However, a local community program can help solve that issue. The Summer Food Services program serves 450-boxed lunches per day to kids in the community. Kids and teens under 18 are able to receive meals at sites like parks, churches and community centers throughout Boone and Winnebago County.

"It's definitely such a valuable resource to us, so we do everything we can to keep it," said Camp Winnebago Asst. Program Director Jessica Dobson.

In some cases, families struggle to find the means to provide for their children. This program provides stress relief and another meal option for all families, despite their situation.

"The two kids, don't know what the other kid is going through," said Dobson. "There's that added security of 'I don't need to worry about my friends making fun of me for not having food.'"

Dobson says she see the impact the program has on the campers daily and the unity it brings between them.

"Especially at lunch time, you see all the diversity we have at camp," said Dobson. "We serve so many different school districts in the entire area. We are a day camp, a lot of parents use our services and so we've got kids from all walks of life. Seeing them together eating the same lunch is really incredible. It's very special."

Camp Winnebago Executive Director Biff Buchan says without the Summer Food Service Program, running sites like Camp Winnebago would be hard to do.

"We take a holistic approach to what we do through our physical activity and our character development" said Buchan. "You can't do that without a fed stomach."

Over the course of the summer, Buchan says they will serve about 25,000 meals to kids and teens throughout the area. Family that may have children under the age of 18 can contact the food service sites to find programming details.