



## Media Release

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Media Contact:  
[Lindsey Neddenriep](mailto:Lindsey.Neddenriep@ozarksfoodharvest.org), (417) 865-3411, ext. 110

### Sites needed to serve at-risk children summer meals

**SPRINGFIELD, Mo.**—As schools let out this summer, many area children will lose their one opportunity during the day to have a nutritious breakfast and lunch.

Fortunately, they can eat meals through Ozarks Food Harvest's *Summer Food Program* at area sites beginning in either May or June, but Food Bank officials say they need additional locations to serve these children who rely on free and reduced school meals.

"The majority of children in our client households who receive subsidized school meals often go hungry during the summer months because their families are unaware of our *Summer Food Program*," said Bart Brown, president/CEO at Ozarks Food Harvest. "Last year, 184 schools in our 28-county service area provided free or reduced meals to more than half of their students, which means there's a lot of need in the summertime."

During the school year, Ozarks Food Harvest serves afternoon snacks or evening meals to food insecure children through its 22 Kids Cafe® after-school feeding program sites. The Food Bank also provides a backpack full of food for the weekend to nearly 1,000 area children via its Weekend Backpack Program™ in 30 area schools.

Ozarks Food Harvest operates the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) at several Kids Cafe® partner locations. The SFSP provides children from low-income families with free, nutritious meals during the summer months, and is the single-largest federal resource available for local sponsors who want to combine a feeding program with a summer activity program.

Last summer, Ozarks Food Harvest sponsored 16 *Summer Food Program* sites in nine counties. Together, they served 31,444 meals to children in need. The Food Bank sponsors sites that serve breakfast, lunch or both.

"We know that proper nutrition is vital to the growth and development of children, particularly children from low-income families," Brown said. "Through our partnership with organizations such as community centers, Boys & Girls Clubs, schools, churches, YMCAs and others, we hope to close the gap and help ensure that all children have access to nourishing meals year-round."

—More—

*Summer Food Program* sites must meet USDA SFSP guidelines. The free/reduced lunch rate in a site's school district must be 50 percent or higher. The location must also be safe and easily accessible to children. Other requirements include adequate space for food storage, preparation and service. A current health inspection is required.

"By partnering with Ozarks Food Harvest to receive food and reimbursement, our partner sites can devote a smaller portion of their funding to food-related expenses, freeing up resources that can be used for other services," Brown said.

Staffing responsibilities include administering the program as well as working with Food Bank officials to ensure the *Summer Food Program* is operating within SFSP guidelines. Several SFSP sites not only provide meals, but also educational and recreational activities to help kids continue to learn and stay safe when school is not in session.

Communities with the greatest need for a *Summer Food Program* site currently include Ava in Douglas County, Humansville in Polk County, Manes in Wright County, Winona in Shannon County and Verona in Lawrence County, among others.

In Springfield, The Food Bank especially seeks sites close to elementary schools with free/reduced rates of 90 percent or greater including Bowerman, Campbell, McGregor, Robberson, Weaver, Weller, and York. Three Boys & Girls Clubs, the Springfield Community Center and few churches typically host the *Summer Food Program* in Springfield each year.

Organizations interested in hosting a *Summer Food Program* should contact OFH Member Services Director [Mary Zumwalt](#) at (417) 865-3411, before April 15.

For a complete listing of existing Kids Cafe® program sites, go to [www.ozarksfoodharvest.org/KidsCafe.html](http://www.ozarksfoodharvest.org/KidsCafe.html).

Ozarks Food Harvest is the only food bank in southwest Missouri, serving more than 300 hunger relief organizations across 28 Ozarks counties. The Food Bank now reaches 20,000 individuals weekly and distributes nine million pounds of food annually. Learn more at [ozarksfoodharvest.org](http://ozarksfoodharvest.org) and at [facebook.com/ozarksfoodharvest](https://facebook.com/ozarksfoodharvest).

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**Note:** Meals will be provided to all children without charge and are the same for all children regardless of race, color, national origin, sex, age or disability, and there will be no discrimination in the course of the meal service. To file a complaint of discrimination, write or call immediately to: USDA, ATTN: Director, Office of Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Ave. SW, Washington D.C. 20250-9410, or call 800.795.3272 or 202.720.6382 (TTY). USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

Transform Hunger into Hope™ at [ozarksfoodharvest.org](http://ozarksfoodharvest.org)

Ozarks Food Harvest | P.O. Box 5746 | 2810 N. Cedarbrook Ave. | Springfield, MO 65801-5746 | P (417) 865-3411 | F (417) 865-0504