
THE BALTIMORE TIMES

Vol. 25 No. 38

July 8 - 14, 2011

A Baltimore Times/Times of Baltimore Publication

Free Summer Meals Served at More than 1000 Sites Across Maryland



A statewide campaign to promote Maryland's free summer meals program was announced at St. Veronica Catholic Church in Cherry Hill on June 28, 2011. Children from the Cherry Hill community sport orange sunglasses with "No Kid Hungry" inscribed on the side in support of the initiative. According to the Family League of Baltimore, 240,000 students across Maryland benefit from free meals during the school year and only 21 percent get meals in the summer. The No Kid Hungry® Campaign will educate parents how to access the summer meal program. Families can call 877-731-9300 or visit www.NoKidHungryMD.org to find a summer meals site near them.

(Story on page 14)

Photo by Lawrence Kimble

Free Summer Meals Served at More Than 1,000 Sites Across Maryland

BALTIMORE— Green Bay Packers' Hall of Fame wide receiver and Baltimore native Antonio Freeman and his charitable foundation, B'MoreFree Programs joined Mayor Stephanie Rawlings-Blake, the Partnership to End Childhood Hunger in Maryland, the Governor's Office for Children, Family League of Baltimore City, Maryland Hunger Solutions, Share Our Strength and a diverse group of partners to kick off a statewide campaign to promote the state's free summer meals program for children and teens at St. Veronica Catholic Church on June 28, 2011.

"Having played in the NFL as a professional athlete, I know firsthand how important it is to eat nutritious foods to be able to perform at your very best level. Providing free summer meals to kids helps to ensure they can perform at their best all year long; beyond the end of the school year," said Freeman. "As a proud Marylander, I want all of our state's kids to have the opportunity to get a healthy meal. If one is not available at home, then getting one through the free summer meals program is the answer. I believe that no child should go hungry and that's why I'm getting involved in this campaign. Parents need to know that their kids can get free meals all summer long by calling 877-731-9300 or going to NoKidHungryMd.org."

Funded by the USDA, summer meals programs provide free, nutritious meals to kids at more than 1,000 sites across the state, including an innovative mobile meals pilot program operated by the Family League of Baltimore City in select Baltimore neighborhoods. However, according to the Food Research and Action Center, only one in five children who relied on free and reduced-price lunch during the school year also participated in summer meals in 2010. In Maryland, one of the biggest barriers to participation has been that many families don't know that the program is available and do not know how to access it.

"Summer should be a fun, worry-free time for our kids, but it can be a stressful time for those who count on school meals. This simply does not have to be the case," said Baltimore Mayor Stephanie Rawlings-Blake. "We're



(Top left) Green Bay Packers' Hall of Fame wide receiver and Baltimore native Antonio Freeman, founder of B'MoreFree Programs, addresses the audience with encouraging words at the kick-off of the 2011 Summer Meals Campaign for kids at St. Veronica Catholic Church on June 28, 2011. (Top right) Summer Food Service Program Mobile Meals van parked in front of St. Veronica Parish Hall for the kick-off event. (Right) Mayor Stephanie Rawlings-Blake sports a pair of orange sunglasses in support of the No Child Should Grow up Hungry Campaign. Photos by Lawrence Kimble

doing everything we can to get the word out about these sites, and this campaign is critical to making sure our kids have a carefree, hunger-free summer."

The June 28 event kicked off an aggressive statewide outreach effort to raise awareness of and participation in the Maryland summer meals program.

With support from the Walmart Foundation and the Sodexo Foundation, Share Our Strength is investing more than \$350,000 this summer in an effort to increase participation in the Summer Food Service Program. The Partnership is launching an innovative mobile meals pilot project in Baltimore City, operating a summer meals website and toll-free hotline staffed by Sodexo Youth Ambassadors, airing radio ads featuring Antonio Freeman, promoting the program on billboards and bus advertisements.

"In our efforts to end childhood hunger in Maryland by 2015, the Partnership has identified summer as a time when many children are particularly vulnerable to hunger," said Rosemary King Johnston, executive director of the Maryland Governor's Office for Chil-

dren. "Last year, more than 38,000 of Maryland's children received a summer meal each day. Although that is a major accomplishment, we need to do more. We are working hard to reach these children and their families and are confident that in collaboration with our partners, we can build on last summer's success and serve even more children this summer."

The Partnership is also working with schools, community organizations, churches and other organizations to improve summer meals sites infrastructure and to get more sites up and running.

"Families are still struggling to recover from the recession," said Kevin Keegan, president and CEO for the Family League of Baltimore City. "Knowing that children will have nutritious meals when school is out gives parents peace of mind. The mobile meals van expands summer meals by reaching children in their neighborhoods and where they spend summer hours."

"We're poised to make a big difference for Maryland's children this summer," said Cathy Demeroto, director of Maryland Hunger Solutions. "Summer



meals are incredibly important, and this campaign will get us closer to our goal of ending childhood hunger in Maryland and improving the well-being of children across the state."

The Partnership to End Childhood Hunger in Maryland is part of Share Our Strength's national No Kid Hungry® Campaign. Speaking about the program, Anne Sheridan, director, Maryland No Kid Hungry® Campaign said, "We are grateful to our corporate partners for making this aggressive and creative outreach campaign possible. Over the last two years, we have seen the effect this outreach can have, as daily participation in the Maryland Summer Food Service Program increased by over 14 percent. It is the generous support of our sponsors that makes this campaign possible and successful."

Families can call 877-731-9300 or visit www.NoKidHungryMD.org to find a summer meals site near them.