



Expanding Opportunities for New Orleans Youth



Evaluation of Share Our Strength's No Kid Hungry in Summer Campaign



Campaign Goal: Increase participation in the USDA's Summer Food Service Program

Target Area: New Orleans, Louisiana

Program Year: 2011

Evaluation performed by the Partnership for Youth Development

Report compiled by the Partnership for Youth Development

in collaboration with Share Our Strength



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In 2010, 30.4% of households with children in the greater New Orleans region experienced food hardship, according to a 2011 report by the Food Research and Action Center. Further, the report shows that 29% of households with children in Louisiana had experienced times within the past year where they did not have enough money to buy food that they needed. Childhood hunger is associated with numerous risks to physical and mental health. Children experiencing food insecurity do not receive adequate nutrition, experience increased fatigue and irritability, and often face greater academic challenges and reduced academic success. The federal government's free/reduced lunch program has long served as a partial remedy to alleviating childhood hunger. In New Orleans, over 84% percent of children in public schools received free or reduced lunches during the 2009-2010 academic school year. Funding is available for meals during the summer, through US Department of Agriculture's Summer Food Service Program. However, only 14.6% of those children eligible for free/reduced lunch in 2009-2010 accessed that subsidy in the June of 2010, and only 7.4% received lunch in July. The percentage of students eligible for free or reduced lunch increased to 87% for the 2010-2011 school year, making it ever more crucial that we remediate the gap between school-year and summer feeding.

Summer Food Service was implemented through two different types of sites. As defined by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, *Open Sites* operate in low-income areas where at least 50 percent of children residing in the area are eligible for free and reduced-price school meals, based on local school or census data. The meals are served free to any child at the site on a first-come, first-serve basis. *Closed enrolled sites* are established for a specific group of children who enroll in an organized activity program or who do not reside in an eligible low income area. The site becomes eligible for SFSP if at least half of the enrolled children qualify for free and reduced-price meals. Because the site is not open to the community, meals are served free only to enrolled children.

Share our Strength, founded in 1984, has a mission to end childhood hunger in America by 2015. During the summer of 2011, Share Our Strength led a coalition of organizations to expand the Summer Food Service Program in New Orleans with the aim of increasing food access for children throughout New Orleans. Building upon a model first piloted during the summer of 2010, Share Our Strength coordinated services among first-time and returning food sponsors, summer program providers, public schools, intermediaries, the City of New Orleans, and the Louisiana Department of Education. By mobilizing shared resources, a coordinated food service strategy, and targeted public awareness campaigns, Share Our Strength was able to increase the number of meals served in the summer of 2011 through strategic growth of both open and closed enrolled sites. Eighty-one sites served Summer Food in 2010. In 2011, the number of sites was 117, an increase of 36 Summer Food sites. A large number of the site increase was due to the sponsorship of Second Harvest Food Bank, which increased the number of sites served from 5 in 2010 to 36 in 2011.



Methodology:

This investigation examines the processes, successes, and challenges of Share Our Strength's 2011 No Kid Hungry in Summer Campaign in New Orleans, Louisiana. Data on information-seeking about summer feeding options was collected from Via Link. Information collected included quantitative data on number of meals served, as well as qualitative data generated by 13 site observations, 12 small group interviews with program staff (1-5 people per group interview), and 11 small group interviews with young people (1-5 people per small group interview). This investigation also explored the following areas: use of summer feeding programming by non-campers, meal satisfaction, food quality and quantity, effects of open-site summer feeding on programs serving campers and non-campers, provider feedback, and outreach efforts.

Numbers of Children Served

Overall, there was a notable increase in the number of children who accessed summer meals in 2011. While Share Our Strength's goal to increase participation by 10% was not reached, many more children did receive summer meals in 2011 than 2010.

In both 2010 and 2011 the greatest participation in SFSP occurred during the month of June, and higher numbers of young people accessed lunch than breakfast. Although the overall numbers of children served increased in all areas, there is a significant drop in participation numbers in the month of July. While a small number of meals were served in August, the amount of eligible children served represents less than 1%.

In June 2010, 14.7% (4,413) of eligible kids accessed lunch through the SFSP (based on free/reduced lunch eligibility for SY 2009-2010). In June 2011, 20.6% (6,568) of eligible kids accessed lunch through the SFSP (based on free/reduced lunch eligibility for SY 2009-2010), representing a 48.8% (2,156) increase from 2010 to 2011. This represents an increase of 5.9% of *all* eligible children served. Figure 1 and Figure 2 show participation for June and July, comparing 2010 and 2011.

GIS mapping performed by Share Our Strength and Second Harvest allows for comparison of the geographical distribution of sites from 2010 to 2011. Figures 3 and 4 show in 2011 not only were there more sites than in 2010 (an increase from 81 to 117), but there were more sites located in areas of high childhood poverty, as well as an increased number of sites that were open for more weeks. Figure 5 compares open versus closed sites in 2011. While the campaign had great success in publicizing open sites in 2011 (there were no truly open sites of which the public was aware in 2010), this map shows that there is still a need for open sites in certain areas of high childhood poverty.

Another factor to note is that the number of children eligible for free and reduced-price lunch also experienced a 6.4% percent increase from 2009-2010 to 2010-2011. This underscores the continued need for the Summer Food Program in New Orleans.



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Figure 1. Percent of Eligible Children Participating in Breakfast, SFSP 2010 to 2011

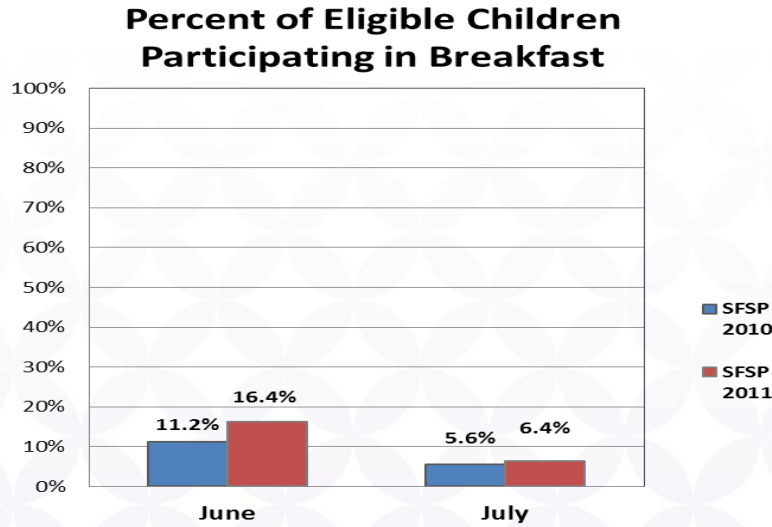
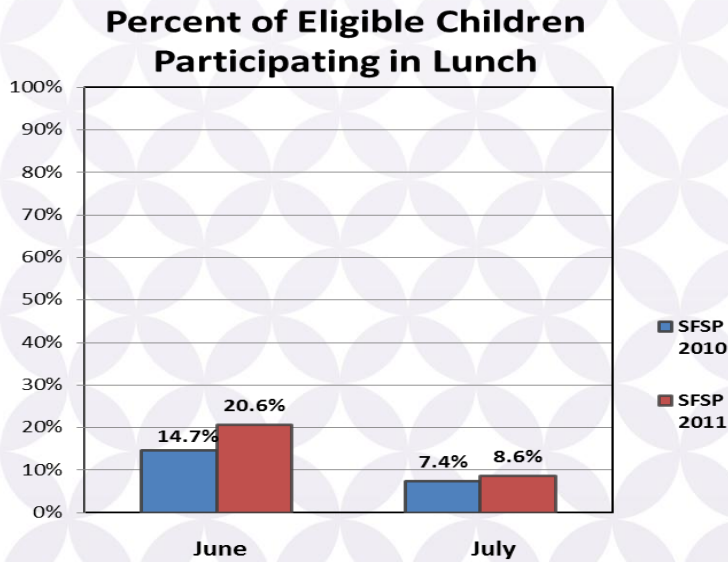


Figure 2. Percent of Eligible Children Participating in Lunch, SFSP 2010 to 2011



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Figures 3 and 4. Summer Food Service Sites against Childhood Poverty, 2010 and 2011

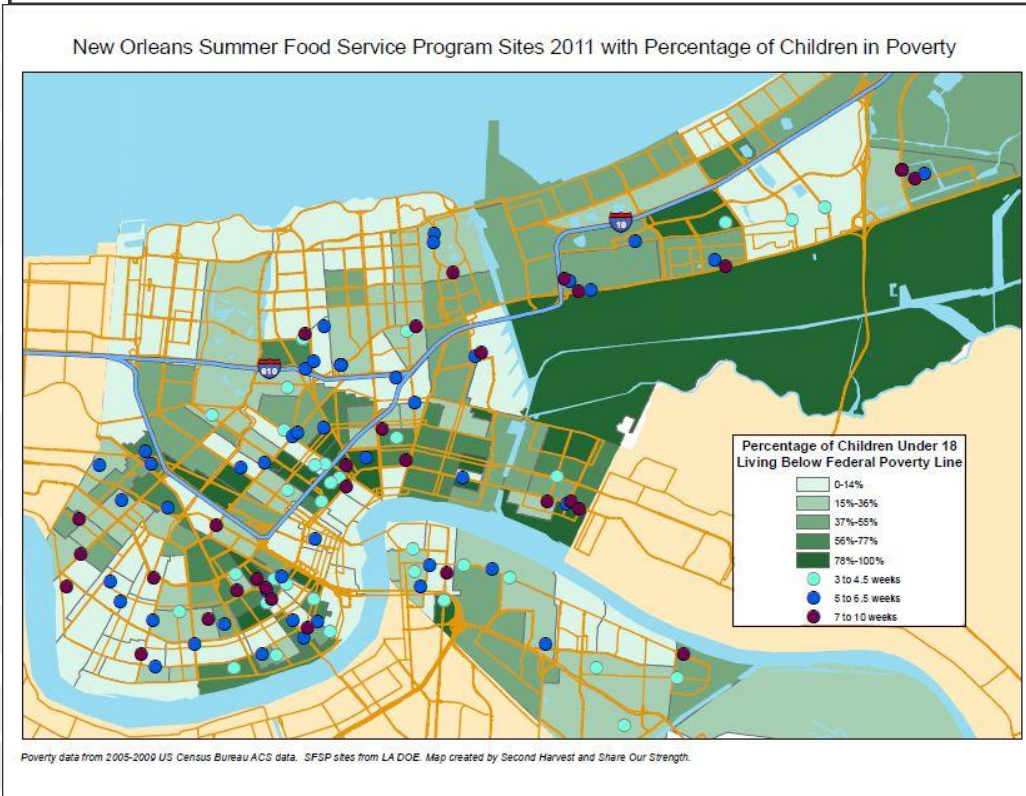
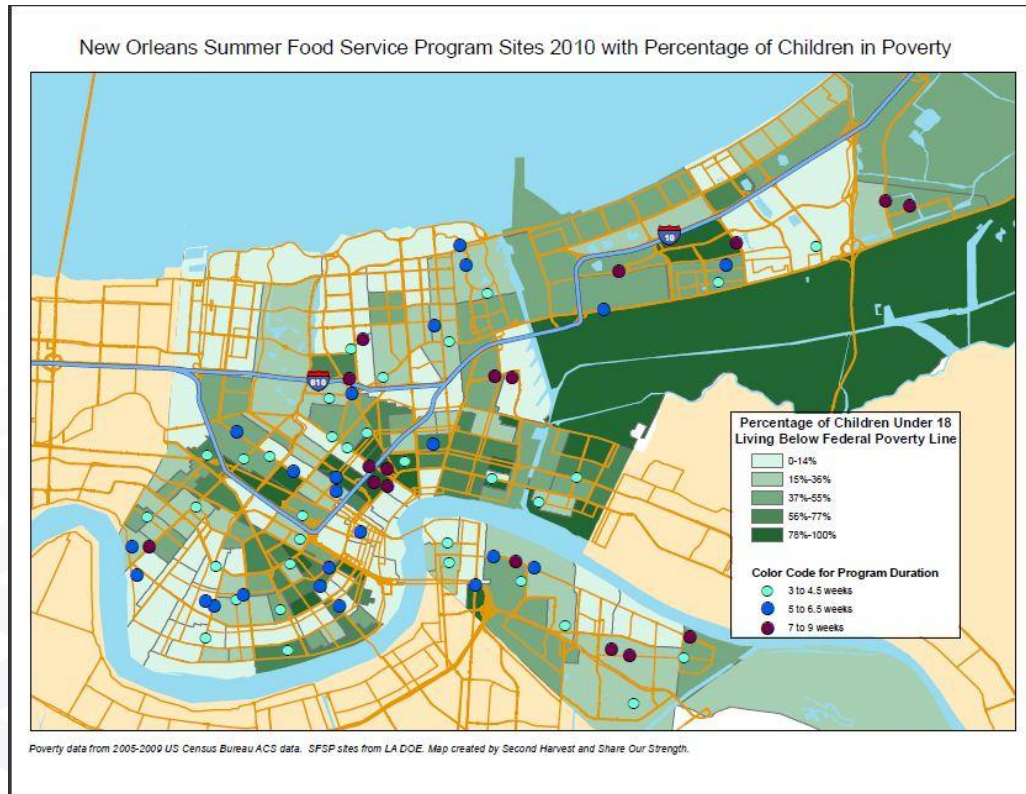
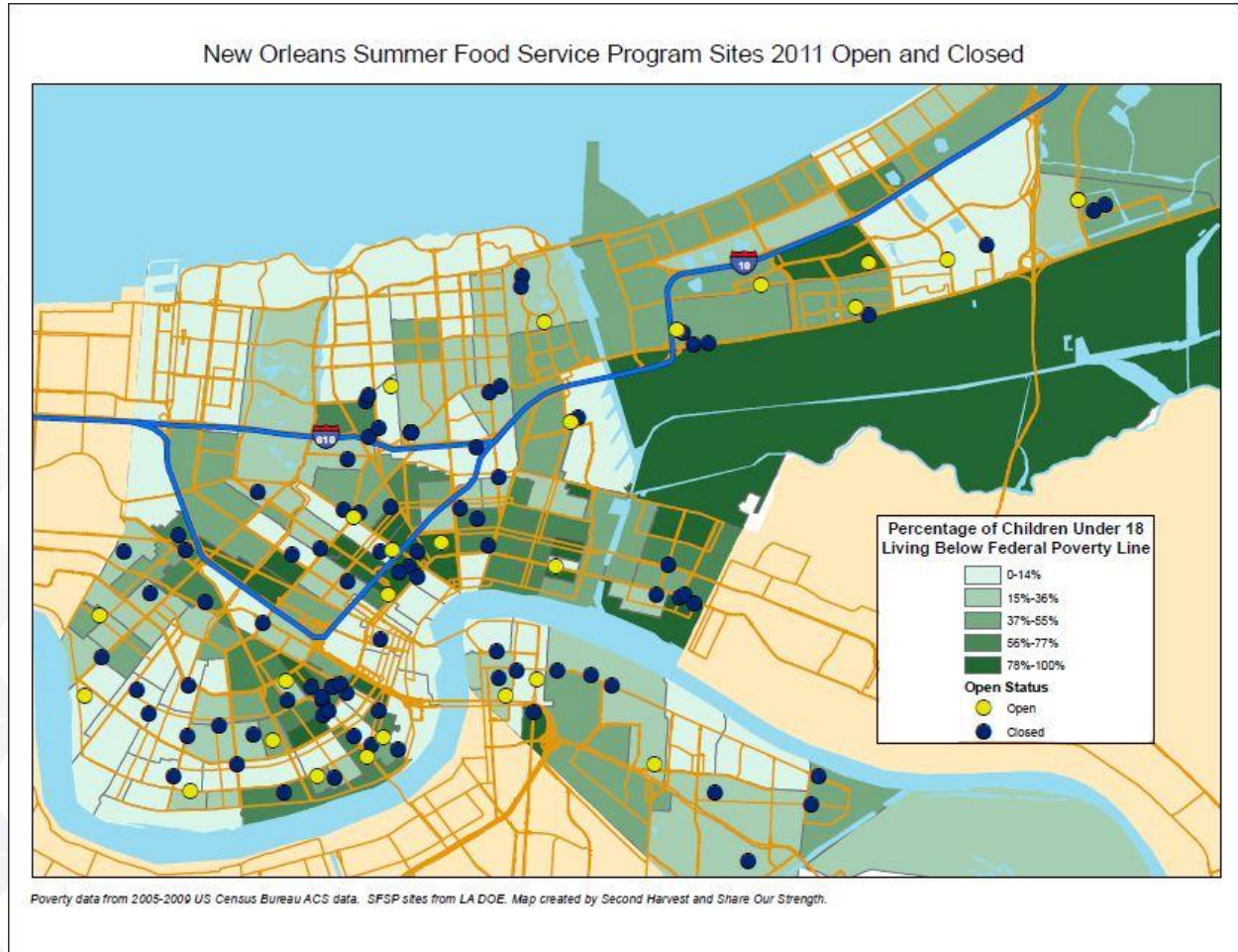


Figure 5. Summer Food Service Sites 2011 – Open versus Closed Sites



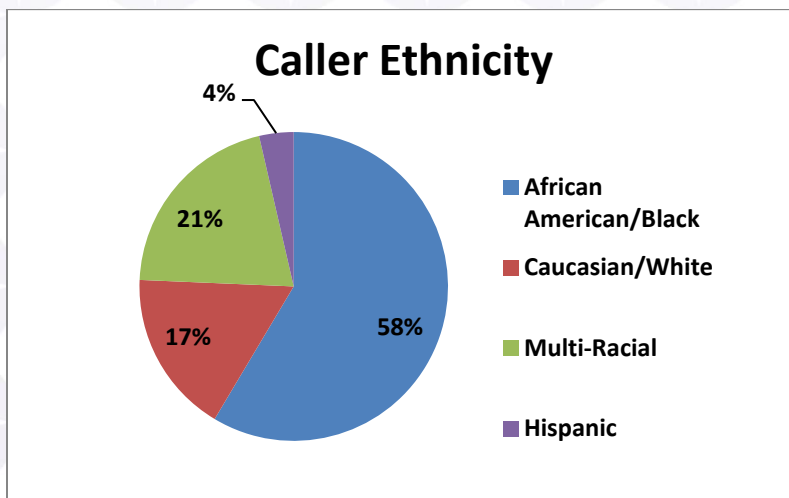
“Open” sites are available for any child 18 or younger in the community to access free summer meals. “Closed” sites serve free meals only to the children enrolled in the programming at that site, and are not open to the community. In 2010 some sites were technically “open” but the community was not aware of that resource due to a lack of publicity. In 2011, the open sites were well distributed across the city and highly publicized through the ViaLink 2-1-1 hotline and other outreach methods; however, the map shows that there were still some high-need neighborhoods that were not served by an open site.

ViaLink data/Demographics

ViaLink provided information on SFSP locations through the website and a phone hotline. The Google map listing site locations received over 1500 views. ViaLink 2-1-1 received a total of 111 phone calls regarding the Summer Food Service program from May 15 through June 30, 2011. Calls to ViaLink were made from 22 zip codes throughout Greater New Orleans. The greatest number of calls were from zip codes 70113 (12 calls), 70115 (11 calls), and 70127 (14 calls) [Central City, Uptown/Garden District, and New Orleans East]. These 3 zip codes combined represent 33% of total calls.

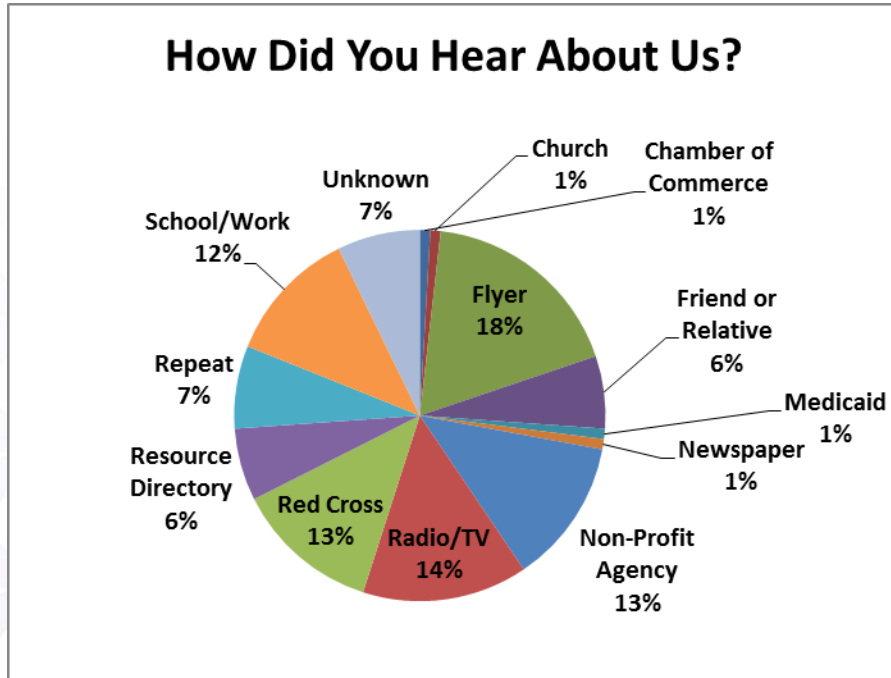
While caller ages ranged from 20 to over 60 years old, 80.2% (89) of callers were age 31-40. Figure 6 shows that callers were majority African American (58.5%); 17.1% of callers were Caucasian/White, 20.7% were Multi-Racial, and 3.6% identified as Hispanic.

Figure 6. Ethnicity of Callers to ViaLink 2-1-1 Requesting SFSP Information



The greatest number of callers heard about Summer Foods and ViaLink through flyers, Radio/TV ads, the Red Cross, or other Non-Profit Agencies, as seen in the figure 7 below.

Figure 7. Forms of Media through which Callers Learned about ViaLink 2-1-1 SFSP Hotline



Site visit and Interview Findings

Of the thirteen sites visited, interviews were conducted at eleven sites. The remaining two sites were Recovery School District (RSD) sites [Banneker and Habans] that were visited during the first week of July and were no longer serving food, despite having committed to providing summer meals until later in the summer. One site [Banneker] was completely closed and a staff member at the other [Habans] reported that Summer Food Service had stopped the previous week when LEAP testing had ended.

Use by Non-campers

Five sites reported that in addition to summer program participants, other young people came regularly to those sites specifically to access meals. The numbers of non-campers participating were modest, ranging from 5 -25 young people per week at each site. The site that reported the greatest use by non-campers was due to a neighborhood church program that brought young people to the school for meals each day. Additionally, two sites reported that very small numbers (fewer than 5) of children and youth had accessed meals sporadically. Three sites served only young people who were attending programming at the site, and one site only served meals, but provided no programming.



Effects of Additional Participants on Camp Organization

All seven of the sites who had additional children and youth access meals reported that this had no negative effect on the flow of meal times and camp or summer school programming. Several stated that this was due to the low numbers of additional participants.

Meal Satisfaction and Food Quality and Quantity

When program staff were asked whether students seemed to enjoy the meals, about sixty percent of staff reported that students seemed satisfied, while forty percent reported that students liked some meals more than others. Overall, staff reported that they thought the food was healthy and nutritious, although some reported that there was room for improvement.

Approximately seventy percent of students interviewed said that the meals were “Good” or “OK”, while thirty percent of students said the meals were “not very good”. Students divided evenly over whether the quantities of food were large enough: half of students said there was enough food and half said they would like larger portions. As the 11 sites interviewed represented four different vendors, the food varied across sites. The numbers of responses regarding this item were minimal and varied, and did not show conclusive findings for any specific vendor.

Provider Benefits

Program staff cited many benefits as a result of participation in the Summer Meal programs. Most often, staff said that the meals provided young people with greater access to dependable, healthy meals. Many staff also reported that the availability of Summer Meals eased the minds of working parents and enabled them to stretch their food budgets. Staff reported that some of the youth may not have been able to eat lunch or breakfast without the program, and they wished that more children in the community would access the meals.

The director of one community site stated:

“The Summer Meal program made me personally more aware of the serious need for this program. It was very helpful-a blessing to parents and kids. It was also great for volunteers and the church’s mission outreach. Kids who had never been to church other than for funerals were able to experience this as a positive place. We would definitely do this again.”



Provider Challenges/Suggestions

Summer Meal providers reported few real challenges in the daily implementation of the program. Many responded that they would like to see greater numbers of young people from the community accessing the meals. Other individual comments and recommendations include:

- Place Summer Meal banners in more visible places, such as the school fence that faces the street with the most traffic.
 - The banners at all sites were placed directly by the school door, which was often minimally visible from the street.
 - Summer Meal yard signs were only seen at a couple of sites.
- Improve communication/number collection processes for Second Harvest.
 - One site reported that the reporting process was confusing and disorganized.
- Advocate for the City of New Orleans to improve their site inspection processes.
 - Several sites reported that the City did not complete inspections in a timely manner, resulting in a delay of the start dates for food service.

Second Harvest Food Bank Successes and Challenges

Second Harvest was the largest sponsor of Summer Meal sites in New Orleans in 2011, expanding food service from five sites in 2010 to thirty-six sites in 2011. These sites provided meals to just under 1,900 young people on average per day, with a total of 101,525 meals served over the course of the summer. The increased capacity for meal production was due to several factors, including a new commercial kitchen with equipment to produce packaged individual meals. The pre-packaged meals were a tremendous help to food sites, as they greatly reduced the staff time required for meal service.

Some of the challenges for Second Harvest this year included administrative support at individual sites and limited capacity for storing milk at sites. Gaps in administrative support will be addressed by increasing training and support for sites in understanding reporting requirements and completing paperwork. Milk was delivered to individual food service sites this summer, which proved very challenging in logistics management, both with refrigerated storage capacity and paperwork and accounting requirements. Second Harvest plans to address these challenges by including milk in the daily meal deliveries next year. In addition, this information can be used by Share Our Strength to identify sites in need of mini-grants which can help improve infrastructure and fund extra refrigeration capacity.



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One open site, 6th Baptist Church, was run as a pilot program in 2011. Second Harvest reported challenges of low participation numbers and inconsistency in participation, suggesting this may have been related to the absence of programming to keep young people engaged and returning. Administrative support was also a challenge at several of the smaller community-based sites, particularly those that were staffed by volunteers. Second Harvest worked to address this by providing intern volunteers to assist with reporting duties.

Second Harvest plans to increase the number of young people and meals served in 2012. One goal for 2012 is to target sites with large participation numbers, in order to reach the largest possible number of young people. Second Harvest remains committed to small community sites as well, even as they seek to increase numbers overall.

Publicity and Outreach Feedback

Directors or staff at five of the sites said they would like to see more outreach and advertising next year in order to increase participation numbers. All three of the community based sites reported participating in outreach through multiple avenues, including neighborhood canvassing with door knockers, church outreaches, and flyer distribution. These community based site directors expressed appreciation for the assistance of Share Our Strength in outreach efforts. None of the school based sites mentioned outreach efforts aside from posting banners at entrances, although several staff expressed the desire for greater community participation.

Other Barriers

While all sites recognize the administrative burden of participating in a program such as SFSP, sites reported that benefits outweighed detriments. However, managing data collection and reporting presented challenges for some food sponsors, particularly community sites that were primarily staffed with volunteers.



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Conclusions

Food insecurity remains a pressing problem for children and families in the New Orleans region. In particular, the gap between school-year and summer meal access by young people eligible for free/reduced lunch presents a worrisome indication that existing programs for remediating childhood hunger require innovative approaches to ensure access. Share Our Strength's 2011 No Kid Hungry in Summer Campaign represents a great stride toward closing that gap. Meals were served at 117 sites, serving an average of 5,216 breakfasts and 6,568 lunches per day during peak participation in June 2011. Thanks to Share Our Strength's approach, which increased capacity of existing food sponsors; identified first-time sponsors; increased public awareness of meal availability and summer feeding locations; and coordinated communications and supports across public and private agencies to ensure the requisite labor force and expertise were in place at each site to guarantee successful implementation.

As mentioned previously, a few simple changes to communication and operational processes will improve summer food service provision in the future. A more concerted effort will be required to improve data collection, management, analysis, and reporting procedures. Developing strategies in this area of program operations should be prioritized in planning for summer 2012.

Overall, however, the Share Our Strength 2011 No Kid Hungry in Summer Campaign was highly successful. We at Partnership for Youth Development commend all members of the Campaign's coalition on truly moving the needle on childhood hunger.