

## **July is The Biggest Month for Fighting Child Hunger**

### **Local News**

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SEATTLE, Wash. - Summertime is "hunger time" for far too many kids in Washington, according to local helping agencies. They are increasing the number of summer meal sites and making sure families know about them.

Lauren McGowan with United Way says Washington ranks 40th in the nation when it comes to getting food assistance to kids during summertime, and she thinks the state can do a whole lot better. King County is a good example of what is happening all over the state right now, she says.

More than 98,000 kids participate in the free and reduced school lunch programs, but far fewer than that participate in the summer meals programs - for a variety of reasons. - Lauren McGowan  
McGowan, who is the associate director of the Ending Homelessness program, says a big reason local kids go hungry is that parents do not know that free summer meals are available. She says July is usually the biggest month for demand, so United Way wants to get the word out now that more sites are available than ever before.

Families can call the Summer Food Hot-Line to find the site closest to them. That number is 800-4-FOOD-W-A (800-436-6392). They may also use the Internet to locate a site by going to [www.parenthelp123.org](http://www.parenthelp123.org) and entering their zip code.

McGowan says summer meals were traditionally served by school districts, but the recession and school budget cuts resulted in shorter sessions, and some areas eliminated summer school entirely. Last year, only about one in 10 low-income children participated in the summer meals program. Her agency responded by making small grants to nonprofits to provide meals at more sites statewide, she says.

"We've got to rely on faith-based organizations, food banks, YMCAs, Boys and Girls Clubs - and it's amazing. As soon as they know there's a need in their community, they're willing to step up and figure out to take advantage of this program and feed hungry kids during the summer."

Information is available at [www.parenthelp123.org](http://www.parenthelp123.org).