

BEHIND THE SCENES: SUMMER MEALS AT LIVINGSTON COUNTY SCHOOLS

Livingston County Schools, located on the far western edge of Kentucky, spans 342 square miles and serves approximately 1000 students. As a rural-designated county in Kentucky, the district has been able to serve non-congregate summer meals since the pandemic. This profile provides a behind-the-scenes look at how school nutrition director Kristy Nelson and her team served nearly 75,000 meals this past summer.

OVERVIEW

Nelson's incredible organization and detail-oriented nature have allowed this program to grow significantly from year to year. With a vast array of detailed documents and spreadsheets that track all the program's logistics - from menu development, to ordering, and scheduling, Nelson has taken all of the lessons learned over the years to fine tune their program. Nelson also found a staff model that benefits not only the summer meals program, but also the district staff and community volunteers who work on the program.

This summer, the district offered seven days' worth of breakfasts and lunches distributed every week between two elementary site locations. Kristy and her team prepared nearly 10,000 meal packs over the course of their program, amounting to the nearly 75,000 meals served - an increase of 300% compared to last year's meal numbers.

By the Numbers



342 square miles



Approx. 1000 students



7 days of breakfasts and lunch distributed each week



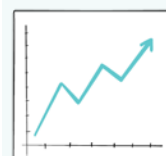
2 meal distribution sites



3-6 staff members per site



10,000 meal packs served over the course of the summer



300% increase over previous summer's meal counts

BACKGROUND

Each meal pack contains a variety of food. From bulk items to frozen components and fresh, meal packs are jam-packed with healthy, nutritious meals for children, including local produce! Their district works with several local farmers to procure produce for their meal packs and extras if and when available throughout the summer.

Families can pick up meals anytime between 9am and 3pm on Tuesdays. This large pick-up window has been key for families, who often have to take time off work and drive a long way to collect the meals. Families from surrounding Lyon and Caldwell counties also drive to Livingston County Schools for summer meals because the pick-up times are more convenient with their work schedules, or there weren't summer meals offered in their own county. Essentially, Livingston County Schools has created a mini-regional hub of summer meals for students in the western region of the state.



Kristy Nelson is the Child Nutrition Director for Livingston County Schools in Western Kentucky. Her district team began non-congregate feedings to respond to COVID-19. They have since fine-tuned their processes and procedures to a highly successful rural non-congregate Summer Feeding program that provides meals to families across multiple counties. In addition to serving as Child Nutrition Director, Kristy also serves in several other district-level roles. These roles provide her with a holistic view of student and family needs and create partnerships within and outside her district. Kristy is working on her doctorate in P-20 leadership at Murray State University.

STAFFING

Putting together this expansive meal program requires a combination of different staff. With anywhere from 3-6 people at each site depending on the day, the program has a fantastic team that supports this program.

The lion's share of the program operations occurs on Monday and Tuesday each week in the summer. Meals are packed on Mondays and distributed on Tuesdays. A food service manager is always present at each distribution site, and they work with a combination of paid staff and volunteers. South Livingston Elementary School, where most of the meal packs are picked up, requires 4-5 people for packing, while North Livingston Elementary School needs 3 people to pack.

Nelson works with district staff who have non-traditional instruction days (NTI) to use up. NTI provides district staff the opportunity to make up working days from when the district was closed for health or safety reasons. District staff who opt to work on the summer meals program get the first pick regarding the days/hours they want to work. The district staff earn extra money by supporting the summer meals program, they use up their NTI days, and they stay connected to families throughout the summer. It's a win-win for everyone.

There's also a volunteer framework where the volunteers get special recognition, which has appealed to local businesses. Any local business that commits to providing volunteers to support the summer meals program will get a shout out on social media, and the volunteers get to connect directly with families who participate in the program, which provides even more visibility. It's yet another way Nelson has brought this community together around food.



Volunteers and staff came from my different organizations and backgrounds to feed children this summer. Pictured (top) is Dan Klidzejs, Chief Financial Officer of Livingston Hospital system.

A colorful poster for Livingston County Schools Summer Meals. The top left features a circular collage of various fruits and vegetables like avocados, carrots, and tomatoes. The top right has a large illustration of a carrot. The background is light green with faint floral patterns. The text is arranged in a clear, hierarchical manner with different colors for emphasis.

LIVINGSTON COUNTY SCHOOLS

SUMMER MEALS

Livingston County Schools Summer Meal Program will begin on May 21st through July 30th, 2024.

 Families may pick up To-go meal packs from North Livingston Elementary or South Livingston Elementary EVERY TUESDAY.

Pick up time at each location is 9am-3pm each Tuesday. 

 Each To-go meal pack will contain 7 breakfasts and 7 lunches for the week.

Only Parents/Guardians may pick up 1 meal pack per child ages 2-18 for the week. Otherwise, children must be present to receive a meal. 

Please complete the form in the link below or scan the QR Code to pre-register for meals.
<https://forms.gle/7MgH7xQ92j7BjjoL6>



Please contact Kristy Nelson, Food Service Director, at 270-928-2111 or at kristy.nelson@livingston.kyschools.us with questions.

This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

MARKETING & REGISTRATION

The summer meal program is advertised on the April and May school menus to start reminding parents/guardians that it will be starting up. Additionally, Nelson posts a registration form on Facebook to assess interest in the program. The form has questions about how many families intend to pick up, which distribution site they will pick up from, names and ages of the students who will receive the meals, and the disclaimer about pick-up rules. This information helps guide Nelson with her planning for the program.

MARKETING & REGISTRATION

On Mondays and Tuesdays throughout the summer, reminders about pick-up and menu information are posted on social media. The registration form remains online throughout the summer so families can fill it out anytime. If families who registered do not pick up meals for two weeks in a row, their information is removed from Nelson's meal counts to keep production accurate. Even with detailed menu planning, Nelson always has extra supplies on hand for families that did not complete the registration form but would like meal kits, as she did not want to turn anyone away empty-handed.

The registration form also served as a measure of program integrity. To prevent multiple meal kits from being given out to the same families for the same children, site distribution staff recorded pick-up information in real-time through their tablets. Therefore, if a family returned to get more meals, records showed they had already collected their allotted meal for kids. While rare, it usually occurred because one parent didn't realize the other parent had already registered or kids with the same name had registered. More importantly, it helped ensure meal counts were accurate each and every week.





ABOUT NO KID HUNGRY KENTUCKY

1 in 5 kids in Kentucky could face hunger today.

No Kid Hungry Kentucky is a private-public coalition in partnership between [Feeding Kentucky](#) and [Share Our Strength](#). Together, we work with state agencies, elected officials, schools and community organizations to ensure all children have access to the nutrition they need to grow and thrive.

To learn more about our work and for more summer resources, visit our website:

state.nokidhungry.org/kentucky



KENTUCKY