



The Open Door
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Saturday, June 25, 2022

***UPDATED* The Open Door Summer Meals for Kids Returns Ready to Help Local Families**



From left: Summer Meals for Kids intern Rachel Ellis, Summer Meals for Kids Coordinator Eileen Campbell, intern Harley Pereira, and intern Ryn Montgomery.

(Photo Courtesy of The Open Door)

**NOTE: This press release has been updated to reflect the passing of legislation at the eleventh hour on Friday, June 24, the Keep Kids Fed Act, by the House of Representatives and on Thursday, June 23 in the Senate, extending waivers through the summer introduced during the pandemic for free meals for children. It also allows children to take meals to-go rather than eating them on-site, to reduce access barriers for children in need of food during the summer.*

A previous version of this press release detailed plans of The Open Door to take on the cost for to-go meals this summer (\$50,000) to ensure any local child in need of a free meal could access that support. This measure is likely no longer necessary due to the above legislation.

GLOUCESTER— With the warm weather and glee of the school year drawing to a close, many local families face the reality of having to shoulder the additional costs of breakfast and lunch for their children.

During the school year, kids can get those meals at school.

The Open Door Summer Meals for Kids program has filled the summer meal break gap for student on Cape Ann since 2002, and commenced its 21st season Wednesday.

“Summer Meals for Kids is the bridge from June to August local families rely on to keep their children fed, and especially with inflation, high food costs, and ongoing economic hardship. We are pleased to be offering this program to our community,” President and CEO Julie LaFontaine said. “With nutritious, fresh meals, local kids can just be kids, stay healthy, and return to school ready to learn.”

The Open Door is a Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) sponsor, a federal program run by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). **At the eleventh hour on Friday, June 24, the House of Representatives and the Senate on Thursday, June 23, passed the Keep Kids Fed Act**, a continuation of pandemic-era legislation to provide free meals to children, relaxing regulations restricting to-go meals to increase flexibility for sponsors and allow more children to access the food they need.

According to Project Bread, food insecurity for Massachusetts households with children has been on the rise since April 2021. As of early March, the U.S. Census Household Pulse Survey estimated 21% of households with children were food insecure in Massachusetts.

“Summer Meals is a win-win for communities, parents, and children,” said Director of Operations, Jen Perry, who has overseen the program for 17 years. “These meals not only connect children to good food, but they also allow children to focus and play at sites offering educational enrichment, sports, games, plus arts and crafts activities.”

USDA SFSP requires a non-discrimination statement that “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.”

Meals will be provided, at a first come, first serve basis, at the sites and times as follows:

- Gloucester Walk-Up Locations (operating from June 22 to August 26)

- **The Open Door** at 28 Emerson Avenue will serve meals Monday through Friday. Monday through Wednesday meals will be available from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., and meals will be available Thursday and Friday from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.
- **Riverdale Park** at 69 Veterans' Way will have meals available from 12-12:45 p.m. Monday through Friday.
- **Willowood Gardens** at 40 Willowood Road will have meals available from 12-12:45 p.m. Monday through Friday.
- **Pond View Village** at 23 Lepage Lane will have meals available from 11:30 a.m. to 12 p.m. Monday through Friday.
- Gloucester Enrolled Locations
 - **Summer Learning at West Parish** at 10 Concord Street will have meals available for enrolled participants at noon, Monday through Thursday. Summer Meals for Kids will operate from June 27 to July 28 at this site.
 - **O'Maley Academy** at 32 Cherry Street will have meals available for enrolled participants from 8-8:30 a.m. and 11-11:30 a.m., Monday through Thursday. Summer Meals for Kids will operate from June 27 to August 4 at this site.
 - **Kindred Gardens** at 5 Dr Osman Babson Road will have meals available for enrolled participants from 9-10 a.m. and 11:30 a.m.-12 p.m., Monday through Friday. Summer Meals for Kids will operate from June 22 to August 26 at this site.
 - **Camp Spindrift** at 27 Atlantic Street will have meals available for participants from 11:30 a.m.-1p.m., Monday through Friday. Summer Meals for Kids will operate from June 23 to August 26 at this site.
 - **Gloucester High School** at 32 Leslie O. Johnson Road will have meals available for enrolled participants Monday through Thursday. Summer Meals for Kids will operate from June 27 to August 4 at this site.
- Ipswich Walk-Up Location (operating from June 22 to August 26)
 - **Ipswich Community Food Pantry** at 00 Southern Heights in Ipswich will have meals available from 11 a.m.-4 p.m. Wednesday and Thursday.
- Ipswich Enrolled Location
 - **Winthrop Elementary School** at 65 Central Street in Ipswich will have meals available for enrolled participants from 9-9:30 a.m. and 11:30 a.m.-12 p.m., Monday through Thursday. Summer Meals for Kids will operate from July 5 to August 4 at this location.

The Open Door Summer Meals for Kids program strives to accommodate all allergies and special diets, and to learn more about the program or inform staff of a dietary need, please call 978-283-6776 or email summermeals@foodpantry.org

The Open Door Summer Meals for Kids schedule will be updated as needed throughout the summer at FOODPANTRY.org/summermeals.

Non-Discrimination Statement

In accordance with Federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, the USDA, its Agencies, offices, and employees, and institutions participating in or administering USDA programs are prohibited from discriminating based on race, color, national origin, sex, disability, age, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity in any program or activity conducted or funded by USDA.

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- (1) mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture
Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20250-9410;
- (2) fax: (202) 690-7442; or
- (3) email: program.intake@usda.gov.

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About The Open Door

The mission of The Open Door is to alleviate the impact of hunger in our community. We use practical strategies to connect people to good food, to advocate on behalf of those in need, and to engage others in the work of building food security.

Founded in 1978, The Open Door is a 501 (c)(3) tax exempt nonprofit and community food resource center for low-income residents of Gloucester, Rockport, Manchester, Essex, Ipswich, Hamilton, Boxford, Rowley, Topsfield, and Wenham. **In 2021, The Open Door helped stabilize the lives and health of 8,516 people from 4,176 households through the distribution of 1.83 million pounds of food.**

For more information, visit FOODPANTRY.org.

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In summer 2021, The Open Door Summer Meals for Kids program distributed approximately 30,300 meals to local children. (Photo Courtesy of The Open Door)