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Map the Meal Gap: Childhood Food Insecurity on the High Plains

Record numbers of children are at risk of food insecurity in HPFB service area

The yearly refreshed numbers for the Map the Meal Gap study conducted by Feeding America shows that 1 in 4 children in the Panhandle are at risk of being food insecure. The study finds that of the 125,538 children birth through 18 years of age, 30,510 are at risk.

Potter and Randall Counties make up the largest group with a combined total of 14,730 children. The troubling statistic is the percentage of children in Hall County which is at 31.3% children at risk, the study finds. The entire state of Texas comes in second after California for the most children living in food insecurity with 1.8 million children.

The High Plains is poised to act by serving an estimated 22,000 hot-nutritious meals during the summer months through the Kids Cafe Program. This is a continuation of the more than 1,000 meals served daily during the school year.

“This information is troubling news, but with the current downturn in the economy, we have been working to combat the problem, this study confirms what we have been seeing,” said Zack Wilson, Executive Director. “We have expanded our Kids Cafe Program by adding two new sites one in the Fall and one in the Spring semester.”

HPFB has been working to increase the food available to the partnering agencies in an effort to keep up with the heightened demand brought on by the economic collapse starting in 2009. Some of those initiatives include focusing on fresh produce which provides a healthier option for the 165 partnering agencies. Since January HPFB has distributed just over 600,000 pounds of fresh produce.

“We believe going forward that the thousands of hot-nutritious meals that the Kids Cafe provides help not only keep kids from the hunger they are often times too familiar with, but the nutrition component helps them focus and learn in the classroom,” Wilson said. “With all of this working together, children can stop worrying where their next meal is coming from, and just be a child.”

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