

# The Florida Partnership to End Childhood Hunger

TALLAHASSEE, FLORIDA

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

For September 8, 2009

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## Orlando Area Doubles Federal Summer Meals for Children

TALLAHASSEE, FL -- Without the August numbers even in yet, summer food participation in Orange and Osceola counties has already surpassed participation rates for all of the 2008 summer. These gains came about as a result of the opening of more sites and aggressive marketing by organizations involved with the Florida Partnership to End Childhood Hunger.

The two school districts, City of Orlando, Second Harvest Food Bank of Central Florida, and marketing partners Publix Super Markets, the Orlando Magic, and the Florida Dairy Farmers successfully brought more federal Summer Food Service Program dollars to children in need. The total in federal funds used to feed the area's children for just the first two months of summer is over \$1.8 million—including more than \$764,000 *additional* dollars (or a 68% hike) over last year.

An estimated 4,500 more children were served meals through the federal nutrition program in 2009—a 66 percent increase. In Orange County alone, this translated into at least 315,000 additional meals so far—which more than doubles the number of meals served in all of 2008.

The federal Summer Food Service Program was established by Congress in 1968 to provide meals to children ages 18 and younger when schools are closed during the summer months. These programs can be run by schools, parks, churches, and other nonprofit organizations and serve as the anchor around which summer education, literacy, recreation, and other enrichment activities are built. Last summer in Orange and Osceola counties, only 6,700 of the over 121,000 children eligible for free and reduced-price school meals were benefitting from the federal nutrition program when school was out for the summer. Early counts push that number past 11,000 for 2009.

The Orange County Public Schools opened 100 more sites this summer, and the Orlando Magic and Publix Supermarkets teamed up to produce and air a 30-second television ad with basketball player, Rashard Lewis. The public service announcement played throughout the summer and advertised a website ([www.summerfoodflorida.org](http://www.summerfoodflorida.org)) and a toll-free help-line where families could locate the summer nutrition sites nearest their homes. The Dairy Farmers underwrote the cost ads on bus shelters on targeted Lynx routes.

Grace Nelson (wife of U.S. Senator Bill Nelson) serves as the Honorary Chairperson for the Florida Partnership, which developed a Ten Point Plan for Ending Childhood Hunger in Florida that targets aggressive strategies for leveraging more resources to ensure nutritious outcomes for children and their families.

**“We just can’t be comfortable knowing thousands of children will go to bed hungry at night,” said Nelson. “We’ve got to get these dollars into our communities to help our children who cannot help themselves.”**

The Florida Partnership will acknowledge Orlando-area leaders who helped increase participation in the nutrition program at a meeting to assess the most effective strategies for replication and expansion next summer.

**Event details:**

Tuesday, September 8th

1:00-2:00 Acknowledgements/Celebration

2:00-4:30 Evaluative and planning portion

Heart of Florida United Way's Dr. Nelson Ying Center

1940 Traylor Blvd., Orlando

*For more information about The Florida Partnership to End Childhood Hunger, please visit [www.floridahungerpartnership.org](http://www.floridahungerpartnership.org).*