

## Summer food program offers free lunches this summer for children 18 and under

Written by

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Bradie Shrum Elementary qualified for the Summer Food Service Program for the first time and all children, 18 and under in Washington County are eligible to receive a free meal each Monday, Wednesday and Friday from noon to 1 p.m. at Southway Villa, beginning June 8 and continuing through July 31.

“This is the first year we have qualified in the last eight years. For our school to be eligible in this program we had to be over 50 percent enrollment in the free and reduced lunch program and at the time of the deadline we were at 50.1 percent. Right now we are at a higher percent. Although Bradie Shrum was the school that qualified, this program provides for the whole community, all of Washington County. You do not have to be enrolled in Salem schools to participate in this program, which is a benefit for all.” stated Karen Libka, Food Services Director, Salem Community Schools.

“If you have a child that is of school age and his little brother or sister wants to come and eat, that is perfectly fine to.” said Libka.

“This program is just one example why all parents should apply for the free and reduced lunch program and other programs offered, it helps the school with many different grants available.” said Libka.

“Everyone has went up in the free and reduced program based on the economy but mostly because of full day kindergarten. For full day kindergarten your income decides what you pay for lunch and other school fees. If you qualify for the free program you only pay \$1 per week for kindergarten, if you qualified for reduced you pay \$5 and if you did not qualify you pay \$25 a week. This encouraged a lot more parents to apply and in turn helped us qualify for this program.” said Libka.

This program has to meet the same criteria as the school lunch nutrition program has to meet but will offer more cold items due to the transportation of the food to the sites but occasionally will have pizza, hot dogs and hamburgers. All lunches will be prepared at the Middle School due to the new HVAC system being install at the Elementary.

To take advantage of this program there are no fee, no applications, no income verification and no identification needed. Although there is one stipulation, the children who come to eat lunch has to sit and consume the food at the site, the only food that can be taken with them will be their fruit.

All students enrolled in Salem Community Schools summer school program will also eat free this summer along with YMCA Day Camp participants and Delaney Park Paddle Club participants.

Children and parents who come to the Southway Villa site on Wednesdays will receive a free book, compliments of Prevent Child Abuse Washington County and on Fridays, VOICE will entertain with FUN Fridays. The program will also be offered for Depauw Park Day camp and the participants of the Lake Salinda Fishing Clinic that will be held later in the summer. Each time you come and eat lunch you can sign up for door prizes to be given away throughout and a grand prize at the end of the program of a IPOD and or a \$50 gift card. So the more times you come and eat the better your chances are of winning the grand prize.

“We want this program to be a big success, but we are going into this blind. We are very excited about the Southway Villa location, but that is the scariest because we do not know how many to expect, we want to make sure all kids who come have food to eat.” said Libka

To make sure each kid who comes to eat will have food, many are standing by, back at the school to prepare and deliver more lunches if needed.

“This is a learning experience for all of us and we encourage everyone to take advantage of

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this program. We want it to be a success.” stated Libka.

The school system will be reimbursed from the Department of Education on how many are served not how many are prepared.

Parents are encouraged to stay with their small children but can not be served any meals.

If you would like more information on this program, please contact Karen Libka through the Superintendent's office at 883-4437.