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## Press Release

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### **Houston Selected to Participate in National Initiative to Combat Childhood Hunger**

The National League of Cities (N.L.C.) has selected Houston as one of fifteen communities that will receive technical assistance and grant funding as part of a national initiative to reduce childhood hunger.

Through the Cities Combating Child Hunger through Afterschool and Summer Meal Programs (C.H.A.M.P.S.) initiative, the Houston Parks and Recreation Department (H.P.A.R.D.) will receive a \$40,000 grant and practical guidance as it takes steps to increase children's participation in these federally funded programs. As part of a multi-year effort to reduce childhood hunger supported by the Walmart Foundation, N.L.C.'s Institute for Youth, Education and Families is coordinating the C.H.A.M.P.S. initiative, in partnership with the Food Research and Action Center (F.R.A.C.).

"By increasing program awareness among low-income families and signing up more sites to administer free meals and snacks, we aim to reach the 84% of eligible Houston area children not currently getting the nutritional assistance they need during the summer and after school hours," said Joe Turner, Director, Houston Parks and Recreation Department. "Increasing the availability of summer and after school meals is essential to keeping children fed in Houston."

N.L.C. and F.R.A.C. will provide cities with customized assistance, access to best practices and national experts, and opportunities for peer learning as they develop new meal programs, increase children's participation, and help cities establish a coordinated system of year-round efforts to feed children from low-income families. Emphasis will be placed on cross-system collaboration among city agencies, school districts, and local anti-hunger groups.

The vision of the Houston Parks and Recreation Department is to reduce child hunger in the city by increasing participation in federally sponsored nutrition programs to create year-round feeding opportunities for children. H.P.A.R.D.'s 2013-2014 goal is to serve more than

25,000 participants in the current Summer Food Service Program and more than 4,000 in the city's current After School Meal Program.

Other cities selected to receive assistance through the C.H.A.M.P.S. initiative include: Baltimore, MD; Columbus, OH; Gary, IN; Hagerstown, MD; Kansas City, KS; Louisville, KY; Missoula, MT; Providence, RI; Rochester, NY; Seattle, WA; Tacoma, WA; Tallahassee, FL; Trotwood, OH; and Waco, TX.

***About the National League of Cities***

*The National League of Cities (N.L.C.) is dedicated to helping city leaders build better communities. N.L.C. is a resource and advocate for 19,000 cities, towns, and villages, representing more than 218 million Americans.*

***About the Houston Parks and Recreation Department***

*The Houston Parks and Recreation Department (H.P.A.R.D.) stewards and manages over 37,832 acres of parkland and greenspace for the City of Houston and develops and implements recreational programming for citizens of all abilities. For more information on the Houston Parks and Recreation Department, call (832) 395-7022 or visit [www.houstonparks.org](http://www.houstonparks.org).*