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## Press Release

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### **U.S.D.A. Child Nutrition Act Provides Vital Funds for H.P.A.R.D. Summer Food Service Program Over 400 HPARD Sites Serving Meals & Snacks During Summer**

Across the nation and in Texas, millions of children benefit from the healthy food they receive from the Summer Food Service Program. The Houston Parks and Recreation Department (H.P.A.R.D.) has been providing these free meals to Houston area youth (1 to 18) since 1980. On Monday, July 6, 2015, H.P.A.R.D., U.S. Congressman Gene Green, District 29, Mayor Annise Parker, Houston City Councilman Ed Gonzales, District H, Jeremy Everett, Director of the Texas Hunger Initiative/National Commission on Hunger, and representatives from the Texas Hunger Coalition and the Houston Independent School District will join together to underscore the importance of reducing hunger in America through the U.S.D.A. Child and Adult Care Food Program and the Child Nutrition Act.

"We are able to provide these meals that directly impact the quality of life for these children today and for all of us in the future because of the U.S.D.A.'s Child Nutrition Act. Without the funding received through this program, millions of children would go hungry across the nation and specifically here in Houston," said Joe Turner, Director, Houston Parks and Recreation Department. "When children are served healthy meals at Houston parks and at any of our partners' sites, we are not only helping to address their immediate hunger need, we are all working to engage these children in other educational and enrichment activities."

According to Best Practice Reports from the *No Kid Hungry Center*, only 40% of low-income families report being aware of locations for free summer meals and only 17% of children receive those meals nationwide. Lack of awareness, stigma towards using the program and lack of transportation to sites are a few of the barriers these families and their children face in getting summer meals. In Texas, participation is even lower, with just 13% of children participating in the Summer Meals Program. This results in over 2 million Texas children facing hunger insecurity over the summer.

"As the H.I.S.D. summer school session comes to an end in the next couple of weeks, we want to ensure that the word gets out to families that there are over 400 sites ready to provide their children with summer meals through August," Turner continued. "Finding a Summer Food Service Program site is as easy as calling 2-1-1 or texting FOODTX to 877-877. We hope that families across Houston will get the word and find a site near them so that no child is left hungry this summer."

The Houston Parks and Recreation Department has sponsored the Summer Food Service Program since 1980. The program is funded by the U.S.D.A. Child and Adult Care Food

Program and the Child Nutrition Act and is administered by the Texas Department of Agriculture Food and Nutrition Division. The meals are available free of charge to youth ages 1 – 18 at more than 400 sites across the Greater Houston area. No registration is required. To find a Summer Food Service Program site in Houston, families can call 2-1-1 or text FOODTX to 877-877 or visit [www.summermeals.org](http://www.summermeals.org).

*The Houston Parks and Recreation Department (H.P.A.R.D.) stewards and manages over 37,859 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 Summer Food Service Program or the Houston Parks and Recreation Department, call (832) 395-7022 or visit [www.houstonparks.org](http://www.houstonparks.org).*