



UNITED STATES  
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE  
Office of the Secretary  
Washington, D.C. 20250

SUMMER FOOD SERVICE PROGRAM WEEK  
May 30 - June 5, 2004

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By the Secretary of Agriculture of the United States of America

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A PROCLAMATION

**WHEREAS** For over two months every year, schools close their doors for summer vacation. As a result, millions of children who depend on school meals to meet a substantial amount of their daily nutrient needs do not have the opportunity to participate in the school nutrition programs. This lack of access to basic nutrition is most pronounced among the nation's poorest children, who frequently have no alternative to school meals.

**WHEREAS** To remedy this situation, Congress established the Summer Food Service Program to ensure that children can continue to receive nutritious midday meals at school playgrounds, parks, camps and other sites where they traditionally gather when they are on summer vacation. Moreover, Congress specifically targeted the administration of this program to sites located in very poor areas, defined as areas where at least 50 percent of the children are eligible for free or reduced price school meals.

**WHEREAS** Unfortunately, far too few children take advantage of this vital program. Despite being targeted to very poor areas, the program serves fewer than 15 percent of the children who receive free and reduced price meals during the school year. To address this situation, the U. S. Department of Agriculture has been actively working to increase the number of eligible schools, community and faith-based organizations, and other sponsors who offer the program to their communities. These efforts have included making significant reductions in the paperwork associated with administering the program and finding creative ways of attracting sponsors.

**WHEREAS** As part of this initiative, the Department has designated the week of May 30 through June 5 as Summer Food Service Program Week and is issuing a proclamation formally observing this event. The purpose of this observation is two-fold. First, the Department wishes to recognize the important efforts of those organizations already sponsoring the program. Second, the Department wishes to heighten public awareness of the benefits of this program for poor communities and to encourage additional eligible sponsors to participate.

**NOW, THEREFORE, I, ANN M. VENEMAN**, Secretary of Agriculture, do hereby proclaim May 30 through June 5, 2004, as Summer Food Service Program Week. I call upon communities to recognize the important achievements of schools and organizations that sponsor this program and to ensure that children and their parents are aware of this benefit. I also strongly urge eligible schools and organizations that are not participating to make this vital component of our nutrition safety net available in their communities.

**IN WITNESS WHEREOF**, I have hereunto set my hand this 11th day of May in the year two thousand and four, and the two hundred and twenty-eighth year of the Independence of the United States of America.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Ann M. Veneman".

ANN M. VENEMAN  
SECRETARY