

ON THE GROUND WITH AT-RISK MEALS

Serving snacks or suppers during afterschool programs can be difficult - balancing packed schedules, tight budgets, and programming requirements is a challenge directors and staff face daily. This series of profiles on afterschool programs participating in the CACFP At-Risk Meal Program shed light on different approaches and models to inspire your program.



Impact 21 Community Development Corporation's Destiny After School Haven (DASH)

DASH is keeping up to the promise of its name, by positively impacting the 120 youth that attend the program. In addition to programs ranging from academics to theatrical arts, DASH provides students with tangible nutrition education in the form of a healthy supper each day.

Juanita Daly, Executive Director, explains that since its beginning, students attending the DASH Program in Rahway, NJ had been receiving a snack through the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) At-Risk Snack Program. DASH supplemented these snacks using grant funds and their own program budget because they identified a need for additional food.

In March 2012, DASH began serving supper – complete with a serving of grain, protein, and

dairy and two servings of fruits and/or vegetables – through the At-Risk Meals Program. The transition from snacks to suppers allowed DASH to serve more food while freeing up resources to benefit students in other areas. Students are now able to have a full meal before beginning their homework.

The CACFP At-Risk Meals Program provides reimbursements for snacks and/or suppers served at afterschool programs in eligible areas. In school attendance zones where at least 50% of students qualify for free or reduced price school lunch, every single child at a participating afterschool program qualifies for the full “free” rate of reimbursement - \$0.80 per snack or \$2.93 per supper.

Impact 21 prepares the meals in their on-site commercial kitchen, lead by their staff nutritionist.

During meal service, students sit at a table with their class and wait to be called up to the buffet line by grade level. Volunteer servers manage portion sizes and dietary needs. While in line for food, program staff take attendance and record the meal count. Program staff also join students at their tables to discuss how their day is going. While Daly admits the application process is extensive, the Child Nutrition Specialists at the NJ Department of Agriculture (NJDA) are a huge help in navigating the forms.

The students are truly appreciative of the food. One student put it this way – “Let me describe the meal for you – Awesome!” At the end of the meal, students take their own trays up to the trash and volunteers wipe down the tables. The trash reveals how worthwhile the program truly is – the trays are cleared of all remnants of food.



Thinking about adding suppers to your afterschool program? Daly puts it best – “Do it.”

To learn more about the At-Risk Meals Program, visit us on the web at <http://bit.ly/K56qXA>.

Not sure where to start? Contact NJSACC (908-789-0259) or NJDA (609-984-1250).

