Without School Lunch & Breakfast, Kids Need Summer Meals

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by Roxanne Henry

Last week my nephew completed kindergarten, and began his summer vacation along with all the other children in the New York City public school system. It was an exciting week for sure, but also the week that hundreds of thousands of schoolchildren lost access to free and low-cost school breakfast and lunch. Instead of wondering which camp or summer activities their children should partake in, many of these families will have to worry about having enough food to eat during the summer.

As an aunt, I am very involved in my nephew's life. Playing an integral role in a child's development underscores the importance of alleviating harsh realities like child hunger. This reality makes my role as the Food Bank's Community Outreach Manager so important: I advocate for better access to federal Child Nutrition Programs like the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP, or Summer Meals).

Recognizing that more children rely on emergency food during the summer, we work with the NYC Department of Education to recruit members of our citywide network of soup kitchens and food pantries to help provide summer meals at their sites. The Food Bank will support these sites by assisting with community outreach, developing activities to promote participation and providing additional program support. Our goal is to ensure that as many children as possible receive free summer summer meals, which are also available at schools, parks, libraries, pools and other sites across the city.

My hope is that, with support from the Food Bank and SFSP, New York City children will only have to think about where they want to play this summer, and not where their next meal may come from.