



### Going Mobile in Worcester

Donna Lombardi, MEd, RD, director of nutrition, **Worcester (Mass.) Public Schools**, has used every strategy in the toolkit—and then some—to make certain that hungry children have summer meals in her community. She has developed solid, sustainable partnerships, obtained significant grant funding and continually expanded both the numbers of sites and numbers of participants—and she has only just begun! Her mantra: “Each summer is an opportunity for further expansion.”

The Worcester “Fun in the Sun” Summer Food Truck Initiative is one example of that attitude in action. Lombardi wanted to feed more children, maintain food safety and ensure proper accounting of both meals and funds. She’d had a longstanding relationship with the Worcester County Food Bank (WCFB), so when WCFB Executive Director Jean McMurray was approached by grocery chain Stop & Shop’s New England and Our Family Foundation to apply for grant funding focused on healthy meals for children, “It was very natural for me to call Donna Lombardi and ask her for ideas,” recounts McMurray.

Lombardi immediately pitched the idea of a food truck to deliver meals to summer recreation sites, such as swimming pools. “We pursued this idea, and with the funding we received,” McMurray continues, “WCFB purchased the truck and then donated it to the Worcester Public Schools.”

One refrigerated truck began delivering meals to two city pools in Summer 2013, with an average of 50 breakfasts and 100-200 suppers served every day. The program

literally exploded in 2014. Meals prepared by Worcester Public Schools were delivered to the city’s five library sites in addition to the two pools. The total 4,100 meals served in 2013 swelled to more than 13,000 in 2014—a three-fold increase in one year!

Lombardi attributes the increase in participation to location, of course, but also to quality. The refrigerated truck keeps food at an optimal—and safe—temperature, so she is able to menu more nutrient-rich foods, such as yogurt, parfaits and fresh produce. “These meals tasted good and were fun to eat,” reports Lombardi. “Children helped us spread the word about the food and the numbers progressively increased throughout the summer.”

With continued funding from Stop & Shop, ongoing support by WCFB and wide coverage in the local media, the Worcester Public Schools school nutrition team is gearing up for another summer of good food and fun in the sun. “In Summer 2015, we are planning to add the Family Housing Authorities and two YMCA summer camps to our delivery schedule,” previews Lombardi. “The YMCA staff are ecstatic that meals will be delivered at meal time, with serving and counting functions performed by the driver and assistant!” Worcester’s summer food trucks are clearly a win for everyone! **SN**

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