



Rural Communities Leading the Way: Spreading the Word through Creative Communications

Meal service programs supporting rural communities must be creative about program promotion as they often cover large geographic areas with limited transportation and a lack of broadband infrastructure. These rural programs utilize multiple promotion strategies to be sure every community member is aware of meal service dates and times. The specific combination of promotion strategies implemented will depend on your community's preferred forms of communication.

Explore the creative communication strategies from No Kid Hungry's Promising Practices to End Rural Child Hunger grantee, Kern County Libraries from Kern County, California.

Direct Outreach with Families

Calls and Text Messages

In many rural communities, phone service will cover most if not all of a community, while broadband internet access will not. In this case, text messages or phone calls about meal service will be more accessible for many community members than an organization's website or social media. Many phone plans also have unlimited talk and text but limited data. Therefore, messaging should have limited use of links to websites and include all meal site information in the text message or call.

Utilizing automated robocalls or text scheduling can be an easy, low staff capacity method to inform families of upcoming meal sites dates and time of service.

Punch Card Promotion

Increase repeat participation through punch card or loyalty card promotions. Like an ice cream shop that offers a free scoop after ten visits, Kern Co Libraries provides a free book after a child attends their lunch at the library program multiple times. The child is given a punch card like the ice cream parlor and receives a sticker every time they visit and participate in lunch. A punch card promotion encourages children to return for a new meal daily, allowing them to earn a free book or other prizes.

Community Promotion

Print Materials

Meal site information should be easy to find for families on your site and around the community. Add meal locations, dates, times, and menus to posters around your meal site and in all printouts, activity pages, and take-home materials for families. Below are pictures of Kern County's Lunch at the Library schedule of events and placemat activities. Notice how both resources list meal service dates and times.

LUNCH
at the
LIBRARY

Lunch at the Library is more than just a place for children and teens to eat this Summer - it's a place to learn, laugh, and grow! This is an opportunity to be physically active, eat a balanced diet, and reinforce skills through a variety of scheduled events designed specifically for families attending the lunch hour. Activities highlight art, music, health, dance, drama, and storytelling.



June 5 - July 31, 2017
Monday - Friday • 11:30am - 12:30pm
Beale Memorial, Auditorium

Children, ages 2-18 **FREE**
Parents & Caregivers (child must be present) \$3.00

JUNE

- Scavenger Hunt • Mon. June 5
- Don't Box Me In: Building with Boxes • Tue. June 6
- Minute To Win It & Guest Speaker: Dance Alliance • Wed. June 7
- McGruff the Crime Dog Puppet Show • Thur. June 8
- Books In Motion: Dance + Literacy • Fri. June 9
- Under the Sea: Shark Craft • Mon. June 12
- Gypsy Folk Ensemble: Dances of Italy • Tue. June 13
- Jammin Island Hula • Wed. June 14
- Hula Hoop Contest • Thu. June 15
- DIY: Slime • Fri. June 16
- Omnipresent Puppet Show • Mon. June 19 @ 11:45
- We Dig Dinosaurs Craft • Tue. June 20
- Operation Lifesaver: Train Safety • Wed. June 21
- Library Charades • Thu. June 22
- Exploring Flight: Paper Airplanes • Fri. June 23
- Making Music • Mon. June 26
- Where We Live: House & Home Craft • Tue. June 27
- Wednesday at the Improv • Wed. June 28
- Stone Soup Story Theatre • Thu. June 29
- S.T.E.A.M: Craft Stick Catapults • Fri. June 30

Every rural community is unique, so when you are looking for where to share meal service informational flyers or posters around the neighborhood, you need to understand what spaces are frequently visited. Ask meal program participants what businesses, grocery stores, laundromats, libraries, and other public spaces they most utilize. These are great spaces to hang posters and hand out flyers advertising free meal sites.

Need customizable flyers and other outreach tools?

Check out No Kid Hungry's [Afterschool Meals](#) and [Summer Meals](#) Outreach Toolkits.

Direct Mailers

Purchasing a mailing list or using the [United States Post Office's Every Door Direct Mail](#) advertising tool can be a fast and effective way to spread the word in new communities or large geographic ranges. USPS delivers or hosts post office boxes for most households across the nation and, therefore, can be a great tool to communicate with families that are often overlooked by other communication methods.

Kern County Libraries sent out informative postcards to families in Arvin, Delano, and Wasco counties when expanding their lunch at the library program to these rural libraries. The bilingual postcards included program details to help families know the library is a safe space for all children to receive free meals.

Radio & Local News Coverage

Rural communities rely on the radio, local news stations, and community newspapers more heavily than other parts of the country. Some rural communities have strong ties to specific radio programs or hosts and tune in daily.

Utilizing these local news sources to advertise meal service dates and times can increase meal participation in communities unreachable via social media and other standard communication methods.

Online Promotion

Even though rural communities may have more limited broadband access, online promotion of your meal sites is still important. Messaging needs to reach every community member, and utilizing multiple virtual and in-person methods will ensure the most comprehensive spread of information.

Social Media

Utilize Video

Expand your social media presence beyond posts about meal site information and static pictures of meals. Videos can increase engagement by showing meal preparation, engagement activities, and special guests at your meal service.

Not a social media pro? Invite teens and interns to make short videos about the meal service. Introduce a competition with a special prize for the team who creates a video that gets the most online engagement.

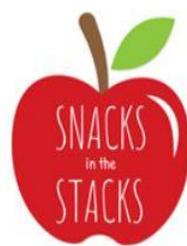
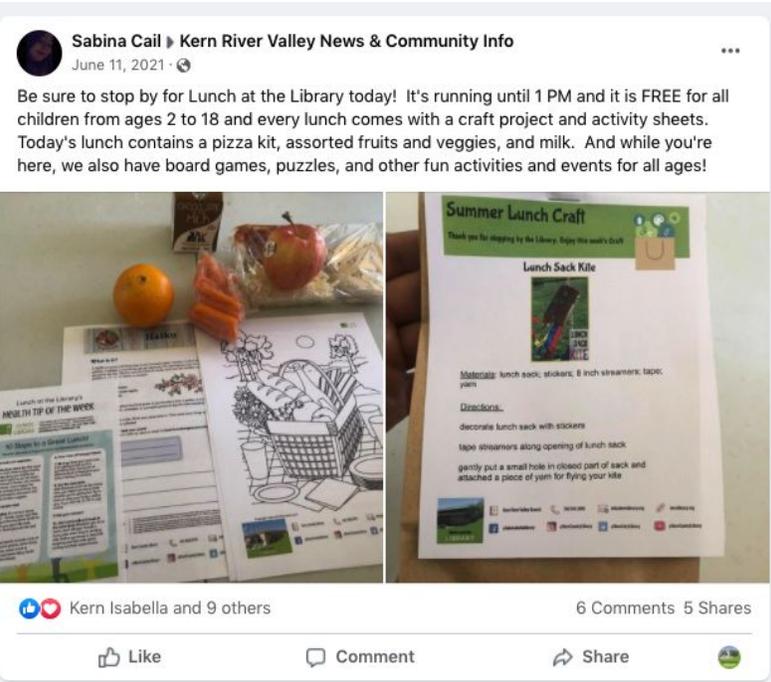
Promote and Host Events

Treat each meal service date as a special event. Post the dates as open Facebook events with listed activities to entice families. Include local celebrities, sports stars, [elected officials](#), and community leaders as special guests to meal service events. Invite [local news and media](#) to join for a kick-off or special meal service events.

Connect with Online Community

Share meal site information with local businesses, community groups, and other community-oriented spaces on social media. These community-oriented spaces are a great online resource hub for community members.

There are even social networks entirely based on communities like [Nextdoor](#). These are great spaces to post about meal sites.



Join Us At The Kern County Library!

FREE Meals for Children, Ages 2-18

Snacks in the Stacks is more than just a place for children and teens to eat this Fall -- it's a place to learn, laugh, and grow! Find the branch in your area serving dinner and a snack and stop by the Kern County Library after school! **All locations are providing a homework hangout space.**



Arvin Branch Library
Tuesdays - Thursdays
3-5pm



Delano Branch Library
Wednesdays - Fridays
3-5pm



Wasco Branch Library
Mondays - Tuesdays
3-5pm