

Community Food Bank's Kids Cafés Serve up Suppers Across New Jersey

With about 26 Kids Cafés across the state, the Community Food Bank of New Jersey is one of the largest community organizations serving suppers and snacks to children in afterschool programs.

The non-profit organization delivers hot and cold meals to community organizations, like Boys and Girls Clubs, schools and other afterschool programs in North and South Jersey. For sites that have kitchens, food is delivered that can be easily heated and served. For those without a kitchen, cold meals are delivered daily.

"It's a really nice dinner meal, similar to what you'd have if you were sitting around your family dinner table," says Lindsey Kennedy, director of nutrition. "The children are getting dinner, as well as the academic assistance they might need."

The program also helps the Community Food Bank build community connections that often lead to expanded efforts to feed hungry children and residents, adds Jeannie Fournier, vice president of programs.

"Creating that community connection is so important," Fournier notes. "When you create good relationships, you can then expand and replicate that in other communities."

The food bank strives to make it as easy as possible for sites to participate in the Kids Café program, including providing an online system to make tracking meals really simple.

"Our site operators can just go online and check off each child who was served a meal," Kennedy explains. "We can watch in real time as they feed children and we can pull



reports on how many meals were served. This helps us eliminate a lot of waste or increase meals as needed because we're able to quickly track meals served."

The food bank monitors sites to ensure smooth operations and troubleshoot any issues that may arise.

"It's a financial burden that our sites do not have to worry about," Fournier says. "If we weren't providing the meals, they'd have to provide the food in some other way."

The Community Food Bank of New Jersey is always looking for new partners in their quest to feed children.

"We're working to make sure folks know that we have the capacity to provide service to more sites," Fournier says. "The more partners we have, the more progress we can make in feeding hungry children."

For more information, contact Amanda Cusumano at (908) 514-3024.

