

Compass Academy Charter School Partnering with the Community

Now in its third year of serving summer meals, Compass Academy Charter School is working to expand the program to community sites.

With its own kitchen, the K-5 charter school prepares healthy, tasty meals, serving breakfast and lunch each weekday for six weeks in the summer, according to Joel T. Johnston, school lead and founder.

The school's food service staff prepares the meals and monitors the students, he explains. The struggle has been in attracting children to the site. For some families, transportation is an issue. For others, children may be enrolled in camps or other day programs.

To boost participation, the school teamed up with the local Salvation Army and provided meals to its summer camp in 2019.

"It's been a very positive relationship," Johnston says. "The Salvation Army camp is one mile away. They come and pick up meals. I bought insulated containers and trained their staff on how to serve meals. We fed more kids this summer, so it helps make the program more economically viable."

Next summer, Johnston hopes to establish meal service at a nearby apartment complex where they have a patio and



shade. He is partnering with the apartment management company to work out the logistics.

Another strategy he has employed to boost participation is offering meals to parents or other caregivers for \$1. While the Summer Food Service Program does not reimburse meals served to adults, the small fee helped offset the cost of meals for parents.

"We are seeking ways to be of service to the community," Johnston explains. "There is such a need in Cumberland County, since we are in an economically depressed area. It's also a great way to get our school better known in the community. We are able to educate parents about who we are as a school."

