



FRAC: Model Afterschool and Summer Advocacy Efforts

Model Program

Advocacy Organization Partners with Harley-Davidson on Summer Food Hunger Task Force and Harley-Davidson, WI

Harley-Davidson and the Hunger Task Force, a food bank and advocacy organization, joined forces in 2004 to create the "Fueling Young Minds" initiative, aimed at revitalizing the Summer Food Service Program in Milwaukee. This partnership began when it became clear that very few low-income children were participating in the free summer meals program, a troubling fact given that the Census Bureau ranks Milwaukee fourth in the nation for childhood poverty, and 75 percent of the Milwaukee Public Schools' 95,000 students are considered low-income under federal guidelines. Lack of coordination among meal providers and very limited outreach were primary reasons for the program's poor participation rates.

To develop and execute a comprehensive outreach plan, Harley-Davidson provided money specifically allotted for awareness and outreach along with funding for child supervision and additional staffing. Thanks to Harley-Davidson, outreach efforts now begin at the end of the school year, when Milwaukee Public Schools students receive "backpack" flyers and specially printed milk cartons advertising the summer meals program, and families receive automated phone calls from Congresswoman Gwen Moore or the school superintendent encouraging them to send their children to summer meal sites.

Kickoff ceremonies are also used to publicize summer food sites and involve neighborhood kids and their families, teachers, school staff, and local dignitaries. For kickoff events in some parts of the city, a group of Harley-Davidson motorcycles drive from site to site, drawing attention to the neighborhood meal programs and passing out Harley-Davidson souvenirs to children. Additionally, advertising is purchased in local media, colorful signage is displayed at each meal site, and Hunger Task Force volunteers go door to door in target neighborhoods informing families that free summer meals are readily available. This extensive media and PR work could not be done each year without Harley-Davidson's support.

Another goal of the revamped program was to reintroduce a sense of normalcy to meal patterns for low-income children. Toward that end, Fueling Young Minds opened more safe and secure public school cafeterias to the children, offered meals throughout the entire summer (not just June and July), and leveraged other federal monies to keep a dozen schools open for a full three meals of the day, two of which were paid for through the Summer Food Service Program and the third sponsored by Harley-Davidson.

In coordinating existing meal providers and bringing in new providers, some of Hunger Task Force's goals were to improve the quality and quantity of service, to ensure an equitable distribution of meals throughout areas of greatest need, and to reduce duplication of efforts by participating agencies. During the summer of 2006, Fueling Young Minds expanded its geographical service area by getting meals to kids in four of Milwaukee's neighboring communities.

"Since 2004, Fueling Young Minds has had a measurable effect on reducing summer hunger by providing meals to kids throughout the Milwaukee area," said Mary Anne Martiny, Manager, Harley-Davidson Foundation. "This unique program has reduced summer hunger and given Milwaukee's poorest children the nutrition they need to have positive, productive summers. Fueling Young Minds is a program of which Milwaukee can be proud."

Other collaborators in Fueling Young Minds include Milwaukee Public Schools; the West Allis, West Milwaukee, South Milwaukee and Cudahy school districts; Milwaukee Recreation Department; Salvation Army; Social Development Commission; and Impact 211, Milwaukee's local social services referral line.

Since 2003, the year before Harley-Davidson and Hunger Task Force took the lead on the summer meals collaboration, the total number of sites has increased 36 percent, the total number of schools open for meals has jumped 154 percent, and the total number of meals served each summer has spiked 112 percent. In 2005, for example, Fueling Young Minds served nearly 540,000 meals, and in July 2006 the program celebrated a milestone by serving its one millionth meal.

The USDA, which awarded Fueling Young Minds its Summer Sunshine Award in 2005, is studying Milwaukee's program as a model for merging public and private leadership in serving summer meals to poor kids.

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