

Mountain View VOICE

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MICHELLE LE

Food providers from the Seamless Summer Feeding Program hand out lunches to kids at Theuerkauf School on Monday. Organizers said about 40 lunches in total were provided.

End of the road for summer meal deal

DISTRICT PROGRAM CUT BACK DUE TO BUDGET CONSTRAINTS

By Casey Weiss

Some local families who have counted on free breakfasts and lunches from the local elementary school district may have to look elsewhere for affordable food this summer.

For more than five years, the Mountain View Whisman School District has offered two free meals a day at its two summer school programs — both centrally located at Castro and Graham schools. The meals, part of the “Seamless Summer Feeding Program,” were served to students attending the academic programs, but anyone in the community under age 18 could also come to the campuses for free food with no questions asked.

But this year, due to budget cuts, the district will have only one summer school site, at Theuerkauf School. Theuerkauf is located near Middlefield Road, far beyond walking distance

for most of the Mountain View parents whose children use the supplemental food program.

According to Gail Burke, the district’s director of food services, this could mean less food to go around just when poor families need it most.

“We will see families showing up at the organizations we partner with and needing more food.”

LYNN CROCKER

“It is going to have an affect here,” Burke said. “It’s nationwide.”

Social services providers say local food banks and nonprofits are receiving fewer donations these days, despite a huge increase in families seeking help.

“We will see families showing up at the organizations we partner with and needing more food,” said Lynn Crocker, a spokesperson with Second Harvest Food Bank, which provides donations to local food pantries.

Less to go around

Sophia Zalot, district supervisor for food services, said the district used to provide 600 meals a day during the summer. But facing cuts in state support that could total millions of dollars, Mountain View Whisman administrators and trustees decided to reduce the summer school program in order to save the district roughly \$60,000, said chief financial officer Craig Goldman.

Zalot has been handing out fliers to local families, letting them know about alternative food programs in the community.

Summer school in the Moun-

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tain View Whisman School District has traditionally been an intervention program for students who are at high risk for not meeting grade level requirements. With fewer resources, Goldman said, the district had to reevaluate these programs.

"If you have limited resources you want to use the ones that are most effective," Goldman said.

Although the district has cut back its traditional summer school, it is offering a program at Theuerkauf for special education students. Food services staff will serve both lunch and breakfast there for students and community members under the age of 18.

Burke said she worries this may not be enough as many local families struggle to survive during the economic downturn. The program in the past was ideal for Castro neighborhood families who could walk to campus for free meals.

But now, she said, "They can't afford to get to the new site." Burke said it's "a definite pos-

sibility" that the cutbacks will leave some local children with less food.

Where to turn

Mountain View Whisman is not alone in feeling the pinch, according to Crocker of Second Harvest, who said schools throughout the state are cutting back on summer feeding programs.

"It is just something they can't do" anymore, Crocker said.

Each month Second Harvest provides over 11,000 pounds of food to two Mountain View organizations, the Community Services Agency and St. Vincent De Paul at Athanasius, Crocker said. This feeds 1,388 children in Mountain View.

But the number of children needing food appears to be on the rise. Local service providers say there is a higher need for food this year, with more families suffering from the economic downturn and fewer schools offering programs.

The Community Service Agency, one of Second Harvest's partner organizations, has a nutrition center where local residents can shop for food at a low cost five days a week. But food donations

are down 20 percent this year, while the number of clients is up 18 percent, according to Maureen Wadiak, CSA's associate director. The agency is hoping for additional donations from community members this year.

"We have always been a lifeline for families even if kids don't go to summer schools," Wadiak said. "This year the situation is bleak." ■

E-mail Casey Weiss at cweiss@mv-voice.com

■ INFORMATION

The Seamless Summer Feeding Program will be at Theuerkauf School, located at 1625 San Luis Ave., this summer from June 29 to July 24. Breakfast is served every weekday from 7:30 to 8:15 a.m., and lunch every weekday from 11:30 a.m. to 12:45 p.m.

The following organizations are taking food and cash donations to help feed local families:

Second Harvest: (800) 984 3663, www.2ndharvest.net

Community Service Agency: (650) 968-0836, www.csacares.org

St Vincent De Paul at Athanasius (650) 494-6226, www.saintathanasius.com

Community Services Agency's Food & Nutrition Center Hours

Monday - Friday*

8:30pm-4:00pm (closed 12:00 - 1:00 pm)

* Tuesdays closed to clients, but open for donations

Please kindly arrive before 3:30 pm to drop off any donations.

204 Stierlin Road
Mountain View, CA
650.968.0836