**Sue Ann’s Notes from 11:00 a.m. Summer Meal Programs Session at 2017 Child Hunger Summit**

Facilitator: Panel please introduce yourselves and tell us how your summer meal program got started.

Catherine: I am Catherine Schiesz with YMCA of the Shoals. We noticed during our summer camps that it was a hardship for parents to send a brown bag lunch for their kids. We had no kitchen so we contracted with a vendor to deliver cold lunches and anyone under 18 can have lunch at our facility in the summer.

Danielle: I am Danielle Turk with the Alabama State Department of Education summer food program and I was a P.E. teacher for 19 years and have been with this program for four years. We are a federally funded summer food service program. We are given funds to train you how to run a Summer Meals program, determine eligibility, and conduct on-site visits. We can help arrange sponsors for your feeding site or help you become a sponsor. Sponsors and feeding sites can be private non-profits, churches, cities, YMCA’s, schools, etc.

Lydia: I am Lydia Locke with Aldersgate United Methodist Church. We noticed there were pockets of poverty in our community and began offering picnics in the park. Laura Fincher at FBNA helped us with it. We now serve lunch five days per week for 10-25 kids. We try to make them feel like honored guests. We use table cloths, have fans to cool them off, provide them with sidewalk chalk and give out snow cones. We give them a different meal each day. We also feed adults with separate food given by our church.

Audience: What is the role of Huntsville City Schools?

Panel: Huntsville City Schools serves as a sponsor for summer feeding sites at schools. Children eat at their school and get a free bus pass from the city. The schools are reimbursed for the meals by the federal program and if there is extra money leftover they can use it for other programs. However, since it is a federal program there is documentation. Huntsville City Schools fulfill a great need but more sponsors and feeding sites are needed.

Audience: So the sponsors must document?

Panel: To be a sponsor, yes. Training is provided along with forms and the sponsor can submit all forms online to be reimbursed. It will be audited so receipts, production records, time sheets, meal count forms; etc. must be completed following the regulations of the federal program. If not documented properly the sponsor site must pay back any funds received. If you want to be a feeding site and not a sponsor it is much more straight forward. The Alabama Department of Education can help you find a sponsor and you will get lots of support from the state to be successful.

Audience: So FBNA is a sponsor?

Panel: Yes, through the state food bank association. The can help you find a great sponsor for your feeding program.

Audience: In Jackson County last summer we had one feeding site for one month. We are having a summit to expand our sites but a big issue is finding sponsors and feeding sites. What ideas do you have for this?

Panel: Some areas in Alabama are using mobile feeding units. In Mobile the school systems gave a bus to the sponsor so that they could transport meals. It was retrofitted and now food is delivered at local housing communities there. However, the kids can’t take food back to their homes so must have an adult supervisor there. Must follow all regulations. In Alabaster a sponsor got a van that was retrofitted to become a mobile feeding unit. It was a much smaller scale but they took meals to the YMCA and churches. In Montgomery the YMCA retrofitted a bus so that 30 kids at a time can come on board and eat. They do an activity where they teach them how to cook a meal and they learn about healthy foods. The meals are provided by the local school system. Faith based activities are allowed and the Alabama Department of Transportation can help you get a bus for it. The state regulations are different for those transporting food. At our feeding site in the Shoals we receive coolers on ice to keep our meals cold and it is delivered from a vendor in Russellville. It was suggested to reach out to Laura at FBNA at communityrelations@fbofna.org to receive information on how to implement a summer meal program.

Audience: How can we stay in touch? I would like to see there be ongoing contacts with others here.

Panel: Visit breakforaplate.com where you can find feeding sites around you, how to become a sponsor or a feeding site. Contact the Alabama State Department of Education or FBNA.

Audience: Dr. Jeff Wilson with Huntsville City Schools Operations Department announced they are making plans for the summer and talked about what those in attendance can do. There were 11 feeding sites last year in the Huntsville City Schools system. 8 or 9 of them provided breakfast and lunch and 2 or 3 provided dinner as well. The city of Huntsville transportation department partnered with us for the last three years to provide transportation and give out maps of feeding sites. Children 18 & younger can eat at these feeding sites and they do not have to be a Huntsville City Schools student. Adults can eat as well for a charge for $2.50 for breakfast/lunch and $4.00 for dinner. A big challenge for us has been to get the kids in the door and get the word out. It is a win/win for Huntsville and we are planning on around 10 feeding sites in June and July. In the past we have partnered with the Showers Center and the Boys and Girls Clubs in the area. Rena Anderson is the Huntsville City Schools Director of Community Engagement and you can visit our web site to get her contact information.

Audience: How do you know how many kids to plan for?

Panel: Our vendor will let us tweak our meal delivery numbers within 24 hours of delivery as our head count is based on the previous day. To increase the number of kids receiving meals we put out fliers in the school and put up signs in the community especially at the local library. If it was too hot outside we knew to lower the number of meals planned. During library story times our numbers increased. By the end of two weeks we knew how many meals to plan for and our church gave meals out if there was a shortage. We did have to have a head count for the required tally sheets so I purchased a clicker to do that. The kids must eat there since it is a federally funded program.

Audience: Do they have to qualify to get meals?

Panel: All children 18 and under can eat free. No income requirements. However, there are some ‘closed’ feeding sites for safety concerns and capacity reasons. There are very few closed sites but closed sites send forms home to those who received free/reduced meals and if 50% or more at your school received free/reduced meals then they will qualify as a feeding site.

Audience: Aren’t the adult meal prices too high? Participation might be higher for the kids if the adult meals were more affordable. Parents on welfare can’t afford the adult meal prices.

Panel: This is a program specifically for children not adults. Sponsors set the prices and federal regulations say the price must cover the cost of the food. The facilitator suggested that feeding sites look for organizations that would be willing to cover the price for the adult meals.

Facilitator: In closing, what advice what advice would you give attendees?

Panel: You don’t have to have a kitchen to serve meals. You can contract with a vendor for meals to be delivered. Becoming a feeding site is an easy call and is easy to set up. Take a deep breath; follow through as doors will open. There are handouts available with takeaways of what we have learned as a feeding site.