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School Breakfast Program Expands

This school year, the Juneau School District is offering free breakfast for all students at elementary and middle schools, some sit down and others grab and go foods. Middle school free breakfast for all students is new. Also, for the first time all high school reduced-price breakfast and lunch recipients are welcome to a free breakfast and lunch.

The Juneau Community Foundation and United Way of Southeast Alaska teamed up with Avista, Alaska Native Sisterhood Camp 70, the Benito and Frances C. Gaguine Fund and the Juneau School District to provide the funding needed for these vital food programs for students. Roughly \$30,000 was needed to bridge the funding gap between federally provided funds for free and reduced breakfast participants and making the breakfast open to all students.

“Our expanded partnership between donors and the school district has enabled us to not only ensure that all of Juneau’s elementary school students get breakfast, but also to provide breakfast to all middle school students and free breakfast and lunch to all high school students who used to have to pay a reduced fee for these meals. Partnerships like this one only help our community,” said Amy Skilbred, Executive Director, Juneau Community Foundation.

Studies have shown that when all students can eat a healthy breakfast at school, a greater number of kids who otherwise would not have a breakfast attend because there is no stigma to having your breakfast at school. This breakfast program relies on parents who meet the guidelines signing their students up for the free and reduced breakfast program because that provides the majority of the funding needed with federal funds. The Juneau School District will cover any costs above the grant award not reimbursed by federal funding.

“Our partnership helps students start their day off right by eating a healthy meal. The school district encourages all eligible households to sign up for free and reduced price meals as this is an essential component to making sure this program continues. We’re working with each school to help make sure that all students have time to eat breakfast,”

said Adrienne Schwartz, Food Services Supervisor, Juneau School District.

The school district will be monitoring the universal free breakfast program for elementary and middle school students for the 2017-18 school year to determine whether having all students take part de-stigmatizes the free and reduced cost school meals and ensures all students get a healthy start to their day.

“United Way of Southeast Alaska has long been a partner in providing food resources where needed in our communities. Reducing the number of children that start the day hungry is a positive for everyone. Studies show that when students are not dealing with hunger and uncertainty about their next meal, they are better able to focus on learning. Also, by funding the breakfast program we hope the community increases support for the weekend backpack and vacation food box programs,” reported Wayne Stevens, President and CEO, United Way of Southeast Alaska.

The Juneau Community Foundation encourages community members and families interested in donating to support these in-school food programs to donate through our website: juneaucf.org or by check: 350 N. Franklin St., #4, Juneau, AK 99801 and indicate it is for school food.

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