



ITASCA COUNTY HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

ITASCA RESOURCE CENTER

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Visit us at: www.co.itasca.mn.us

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

ITASCA COUNTY SCHOOLS STILL MOBILIZED TO FEED STUDENTS THIS SUMMER

(Grand Rapids, Minn., June 4, 2020) – The number of laboratory-confirmed Itasca area COVID-19 cases remains at more than 60 and, thankfully, no additional deaths since Monday, reports Kelly Chandler, department manager for Itasca County Public Health. To date, 10 Itasca area residents between 50 and 100 have passed away in COVID-related deaths.

Despite disruptions in the metro area, labs running testing for local hospitals and clinics have not been affected, report Itasca County area providers.

“I see our Itasca area communities coming together, working as families and groups, to keep each other safe,” said Chandler. “It matters. No, we’re not perfect. But the better we can be, the more likely that we will be able to get back to the things we miss. Like other public health officials, I expect COVID-19 to hit us in waves, and we need to stick with it.

“Public health is about prevention. It’s about promoting and protecting the health of people and the communities where they live, learn, work and play. Access to healthy foods is one of the key pieces to public health and makes us more resilient to COVID-19 and other diseases. This is especially true for children.”

“In the Itasca County area, before the pandemic, 18 percent of area children lived in food-insecure households,” according to Sue Estee, executive director of Second Harvest North Central Food Bank. “That’s about 1,750 children. These estimates are based on poverty levels and unemployment, so the number of children going hungry is probably much higher now.”

Schools also are keenly aware of the importance of food in learning and development. In the Itasca area, more than half of children qualified for free and reduced lunch as of October 2019, according to Minnesota Department of Education. The role of schools in providing meals for children has been heightened in light of the pandemic, raising to a new level the effort and commitment of school nutrition programs, even into the summer season.

Bigfork and Grand Rapids Schools



Summer meals will still be available for all children under the age of 18. Breakfast and lunch will be available for pick up from 11:00 - 11:30 a.m. Monday through Friday at RJEMS and Southwest Elementary. Bigfork School will also have pick up available on Monday and Wednesday. At Bigfork, students will be able to pick up meals for multiple days.

Meals are free regardless of ability to pay. If you have questions about the Summer Meal Program, call the District 318 Food and Nutrition Department at 327-5771.

Deer River Schools

Since March, Deer River Schools have provided 63,000 to-go meals for students. The program will continue into summer at delivery sites within the school district boundaries at no charge for all students 18 and under.

To-go lunches are available every weekday at King Elementary. Hours on Monday, Wednesday and Thursday are 11:00 a.m. – noon. On Tuesday and Friday, hours are 10:00 a.m. – noon.

The following sites will have two days' worth of food (breakfasts and lunches) available for pick-up on Tuesdays and Fridays between 10:00 a.m and noon.

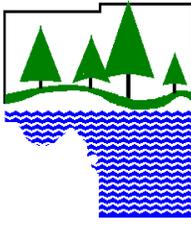
- Ball Club Community Center
- Bena Community Center
- Bowstring Store
- Gosh Dam Place/Winnie Dam
- Inger Community Center
- Evergreen Terrace
- S. Lake Community Center
- Deer River High School

Greenway Schools

Greenway will continue to have meal pick-up through August for all children and teens, 18 and under. Available Monday through Thursday at Marble (9:00 – 9:45 a.m.) and Greenway High School (10:15 – 11:00 a.m., Door #2). Meals also are available for people with disabilities and who are over the age of 18 and participate in school programs for the mentally or physically disabled.

Nashwauk and Keewatin Schools

Starting June 3, free meal pick-up is available for children at Keewatin Elementary (Monday-Thursday, 10:00 – 11:00 a.m., Door 1) and Nashwauk-Keewatin High School (Monday-Thursday, 10:30 – 11:30).



Itasca County's enhanced Call Center provides live staffing Monday through Friday, 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., at 218-327-6784 for those with COVID-related issues and needs.

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Helpful resources:

Links to all area schools: www.iasc.k12.mn.us and their various summer food programs

Area food banks and other sources, searchable: <https://secondharvestncfb.com/get-help/find-food/>

Note to media: Itasca County Health Department will host 30-minute press briefings on Fridays at 10:00 a.m. as needed. Recordings available. Contact anna.anttila@co.itasca.mn.us for more information.

Media Contacts

Please contact each organization individually or Itasca County staff: Kelly Chandler (218-327-6144 and Kelly.chandler@co.itasca.mn.us) or Anna Anttila (anna.anttila@co.itasca.mn.us).