

## **Facing the Issue of Unhealthy Food**

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Question: *What are you going to do to help get kids healthier food in schools?*

During the Youth Summit this past month, one of the issues we asked the youth to think about was unhealthy food in schools. I provided them with data and statistics to help them keep in mind certain difficulties a student might have, like financial issues, so that their ideas would help everyone. A few statistics about how many students buy lunch compared to getting free/reduced lunch are listed here:

- Nearly 100,000 schools serve lunches to a total of 30.5 million students each day; around 60% of them receive free lunch, 10% reduced-priced lunch, and 30% pay full price.
- In 2014, 15.3 million children (under 18) in the US live in households that are unable to consistently access enough food.

I also asked some of the following questions to get them thinking about the issue:

- What's stopping schools from serving healthier foods?
- What are "healthy foods"?
- How does the quality of school food differ based on the price of food?

### Santa Fe Specifics:

"The food-relief charitable group Feeding America, using 2012 data, reports that 1 in 6 Americans suffer from "food insecurity," meaning they don't have enough food for their families. Feeding America's most recent data shows that nearly 19 percent of New Mexicans deal with food insecurity. A 2013 Food Research and Action Center report listed New Mexico 21st in hunger ratings for 2012."

"While many of us may take our food for granted, there are at least 21,270 individuals (14.9 %) living in Santa Fe County who do not know where their next meal comes from...Such limited access [to grocery stores] also contributes to a growing rate of obesity. With almost 30,000 county residents experiencing the effects of obesity, the current generation of youth is poised to be the first generation with a lower life expectancy than that of their parents. Limited access to fresh, affordable foods is a challenge for many of us."

In addition, "Jennifer Ramo, executive director of the Albuquerque-based nonprofit New Mexico Appleseed, which works to end hunger in the state, said many kids who do not have access to school food during the summer tend to eat junk food, which in turn can increase obesity rates."

Final Thought: In Santa Fe, access to healthy foods is a challenge that is facing our youth in schools and in our local communities.

### Sources:

**Summer program provides free meals for children**, Sunday, June 1, 2014, By Robert Nott, The New Mexican  
<[http://www.santafenewmexican.com/news/local\\_news/summer-program-provides-free-meals-for-children/article\\_a41b49a5-9335-589f-b899-a37f69b29444.html](http://www.santafenewmexican.com/news/local_news/summer-program-provides-free-meals-for-children/article_a41b49a5-9335-589f-b899-a37f69b29444.html)>

**Planning Santa Fe's Food Future - Farm to Table**, October, 2013  
<<http://www.farmtotablenm.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/02/SFFoodPlan-2.pdf>>