

July 15, 2024

Cheryl Burns, Superintendent and the SISD School Board,

I have a couple of really exciting things I would like to report to you this month.

First, I have been given the opportunity to represent the state of Texas as well as Smithville ISD at the National Child Nutrition conference in Boston, MA this week. Texas Department of Agriculture submitted my name and Smithville ISD's non-congregate summer program to USDA as part of a panel to present at this year's conference. I was honored to be chosen as one of only 3 panelists (Texas, Louisiana & Tennessee) by USDA to be part of this presentation. This is a great opportunity to showcase our successful Rural Non-Congregate Program. The expenses of this trip were paid by the Central Texas School Food Service Directors Association. I will be anxious to report back to you about this opportunity at the August board meeting.

Many of you may not know, but this is the first year since Covid that we were allowed to serve meals in a non-congregate service. This is something I have diligently been fighting for the last 2 years. As times change and the cost of food increases I know there is so much more need for us as school districts to make food more accessible to our community. This has not been an easy process to have an approved NC program but it has been worth the battle. We are distributing meals 2 days a week with 3 days of breakfast and lunch on Mondays and 4 days of breakfast and lunch on Thursdays at 3 locations. The locations are Lake Thunderbird Community Center, MLK Park and Rosanky Community Center. July is normally low in participation for Summer Feeding, but this year we are still serving an average of 100 children. We were fortunate to serve 30 in the month of July in the past.

Second, Smithville ISD summer program has been chosen by No Kid Hungry to be spotlighted with a media blitz. On Thursday, July 11th the NKH national media staff came to Smithville to make a recording of our Summer Non-Congregate Program. They recorded our student and adult workers as they fill the food bags for distribution, the loading process as well as following our vans to the sites to record our distribution process. Interviews were given by Mrs. Burns, myself, and families at each distribution site. Representative Stan Gerdes was also in attendance as well as a couple of the local news outlets. This, again, is a big honor for our district and department as this video will be shared with many media outlets as well as serving as a training for other rural districts considering non-congregate feeding in the future. I will be happy to share a copy of the video when it is sent to me.

I am very proud of my staff and all the hard work they have contributed to make this summer the success it is and to be recognized for their hard work.

Sincerely submitted by

Candy Biehle, Child Nutrition Director