

## **A Summer Partnership That Feeds Minds & Bodies**

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The McCracken County Public Library's mission is to empower everyone to discover, grow, learn, and play through our programs, services, and resources. We strive to enrich our community by providing innovative programs, a diverse materials collection, access to technology, and exceptional customer service to our patrons. Among the library's strategic initiatives are community engagement and learning and discovery. Through community engagement, we seek to connect with our patrons through outreach, partnerships, and collaboration. One such partnership is with a local area school system's summer nutrition service.



The Paducah Independent School System operates within the city limits of Paducah, Kentucky, the county seat of McCracken County. The school district has been participating in the U.S. Department of Agriculture's summer feeding program for approximately four to five years. The school system offers its students 23 feeding sites, many of which are mobile and brought to students at different locations around Paducah neighborhoods via bus or van. In an interview with the Paducah Sun newspaper,

Paducah Independent Schools Director of Food and Nutrition Services Lynsi Barnhill told reporters the school served over 36,000 meals in the summer of 2017.

For the last two summers, McCracken County Public Library staff have followed the Paducah Public School system's vans to mobile sites to distribute free books and summer reading logs along with the school's free lunches. This partnership allows the school system and the library to work together to feed students' bodies and minds during the summer months when school is not in session. Library workers from both the Youth Services and the Adult Services staff volunteered to make the program a success. The library donated over 1500 books to Paducah Independent School System students this year alone.

The success of this partnership demonstrates that while libraries can serve as USDA food services sites, they can also partner with existing service sites in their community to bring books and summer learning programs to children who might not otherwise be able to reach the library during the summer months. By partnering with the Paducah Public School system's food nutrition service to meet these children where they are, the library is also able to accomplish its strategic initiative of learning and discovery, even for those who lack access to the library's physical location.