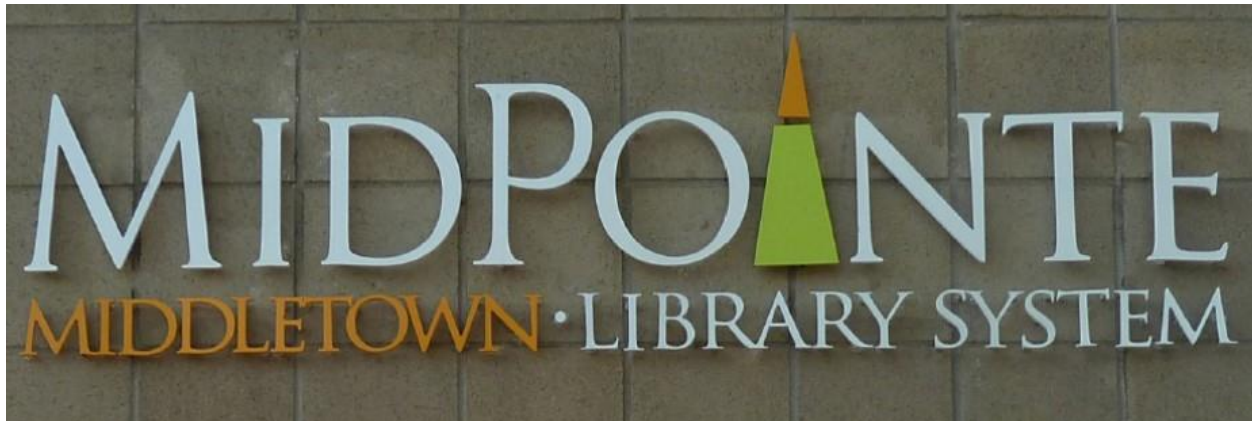


Filling a Void in Middletown

by Ally Doliboa Youth Programming Library MidPointe Library System

The Middletown branch of the MidPointe Library System is in our fourth year of participating in the Summer Food Service Program. During this time, we have made a handful of adjustments to better serve our youth, ranging from adjusting serving times, Sponsors that best fit our needs, and adding additional meals.

When we started our SFSP journey in 2016, we were approached by a Sponsor that offered hot meals three days a week and cold meals the other two days. We loved the variety that we could offer, and it turned out that our patrons loved the variety as well! Due to our limited room space (the room that we serve lunches in is the same room that we book for our Summer Reading special performers) we opted to try an earlier serving time for our first year; we served from 11 AM to 12 PM. That turned out to be a tad too early for our kids. It aligned well with the programs we offered in the morning time frame and gave us plenty of time to get ready for the special performers in the afternoon, but most of our patrons came in closer to noon for lunch. We kept the same Sponsor in 2017 and knowing that the early serving time didn't seem to work out as planned, we decided to try serving from 11:30 AM to 12:30 PM. We still received both hot and cold lunches, and the time combination and the meal options seemed to be a good hit!



In 2017, we more than doubled the amount of youth we served lunches to. 2018 was an unusual year, as our State approval was taking longer than usual for our site to be up and running. Since there are various other sites supplied by a different Sponsor throughout Middletown, we seemed to be losing the youth that we had previously fed for the last two summers. While we were glad that they had access to lunches in our city, we were sad to see our numbers drop. It turned out that our school district had a long summer to finish up a construction project and we wanted to make sure we provided meals to our youth until they returned to school.

Luckily, we had a Sponsor in town that was willing to add us on as one of their sites for the remainder of the summer, since our initial Sponsor did not have that capability. Our kids had access to lunches their entire summer break and that was important to us at the Library, and to our new Sponsor. 2019 brought even more changes for us to better serve our patrons. We got approached by yet another Sponsor that could offer us hot meals Monday thru Friday!

Throughout our years of being a serving site, our most common feedback was asking if we could have hot meals the entire week. With our previous two Sponsors, that was beyond our control. Now we had the option for hot or cold meals – and we decided upon hot meals. Another added benefit we had with this new Sponsor was the option of adding a snack time later in the afternoon. We immediately jumped at this offer, knowing once the word got out, we would have happy youth (and guardians)! While we have had ups and downs over the past four years, our main goal is to make sure the youth in our city have access to healthy meals, and we are doing just that.

