



August 2009 | www.floridaimpact.org | SFSP Report

Florida Impact Addressing Hunger in Florida by Increasing Participation in the Summer Food Service Program

Florida Impact is celebrating its 30th year as the state's leading anti-hunger policy organization. Impact takes a two-pronged approach to addressing the root causes of hunger and poverty.

- It provides research and coordination to support and inform the direct involvement of community leaders in advocating for responsive public policies and programs.
- It conducts aggressive outreach strategies at both the state and community levels to ensure that federal food and child nutrition programs are fully accessible to those for whom they are intended.

The federal summer nutrition programs provide a key example of how Florida Impact addresses hunger in Florida at the state, local, and federal levels.

Passage of State Policy to Require More Sites in Florida's Communities to Feed Children in the Summer Months—

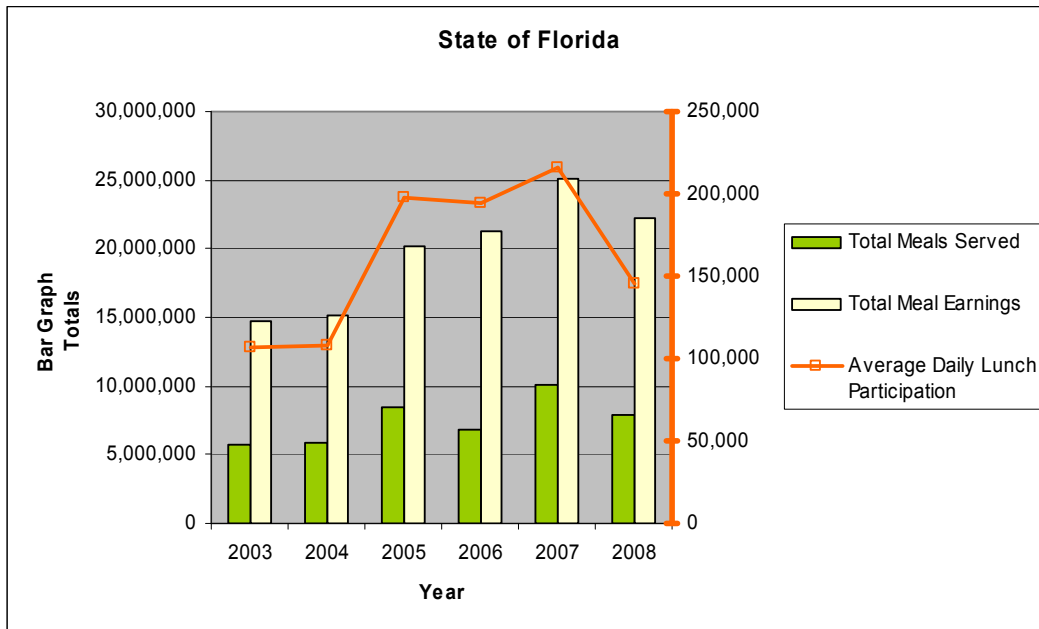
During the 2007-2008 school year, nearly 1.3 million children in Florida were eligible for free or reduced-price school meals.¹ When school is out for the summer, these meals become unavailable to low-income families, and that's where the federal Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) kicks in. The SFSP provides federal funds to public and private nonprofit organizations operating in low-income neighborhoods to serve nutritious meals to all children in a community. Approximately 2805 sites exist within all of Florida's 67 counties—including schools, parks and recreation programs, low-income housing complexes, or community parks and pools, essentially any place children gather during the summer months. These are sponsored by 135 different organizations that agree to oversee the program per federal regulations. According to the

Florida Department of Education, the state agency that administers SFSP in Florida, in Orange County alone there are four sponsors with a total of 202 active sites. Sponsors = Orange County Public Schools - 167 sites, City of Orlando Recreation - 20 sites, Second Harvest Food Bank of Central Florida - 12 sites, Town of Eatonville - 3 sites.

In 2005 the SFSP was only reaching 1 in 10 of Florida’s children from low-income families, and there were six rural counties in which children had no access to the program at all.ⁱⁱ The state as a whole was seeing successive drops in SFSP average daily attendance for the previous six years, i.e., from 197,140 ADA in 1999 to 108,398 ADA in 2004.ⁱⁱⁱ And with each year, Florida was hemorrhaging federal funds designated for hungry children.

In response, Florida Impact organized a network of leaders that drafted and passed the Willie Ann Glenn Act (WAG)—state legislation that would require summer food programs to operate in each school district in or near elementary schools where 50 percent or more children are eligible for free or reduced-price school meals. At least one site in each county had to stay open for the full 35 day of summer.

By 2007, the WAG Act’s full effect on the state was dramatic. From 2003 the total meals served through federal summer nutrition programs went up 75%, which generated a 69% increase in total federal meal earnings, and average daily lunch attendance climbed an impressive 102%!



Note: The 2008 decline may in part reflect the failing economy and state budget cuts leading to a perception by both public and private nonprofits of fiscal risks in maintaining SFSP sites.

Assisting Florida's Congressional Leaders to Add Florida to Simplified Summer Food Program—

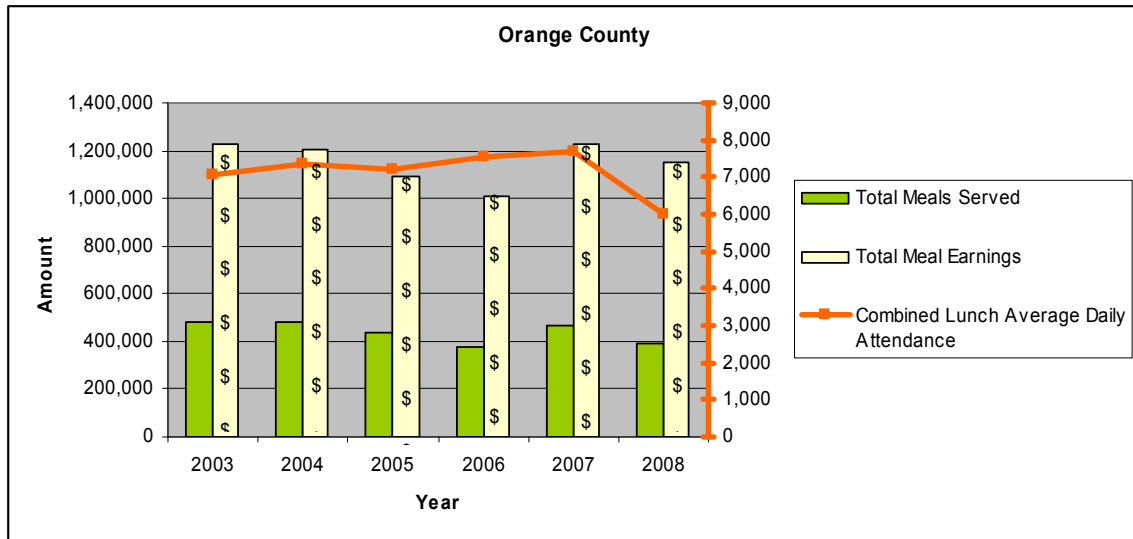
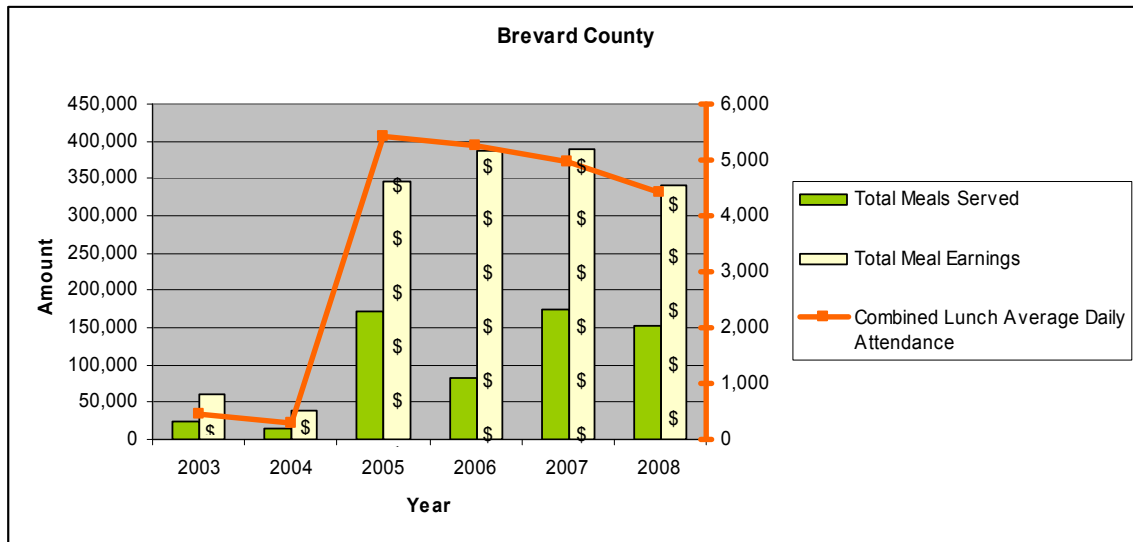
Florida Impact—working in league with other state anti-hunger organizations and the Food Research and Action Center (FRAC) in Washington—effectively advocates for food and nutrition program changes that have a direct bearing on Florida and its 67 counties. Recent passage of the FY2008 Omnibus Appropriations Act, which expanded the Simplified Summer Food Service (SSFP) Program to all states, is an example of that work.

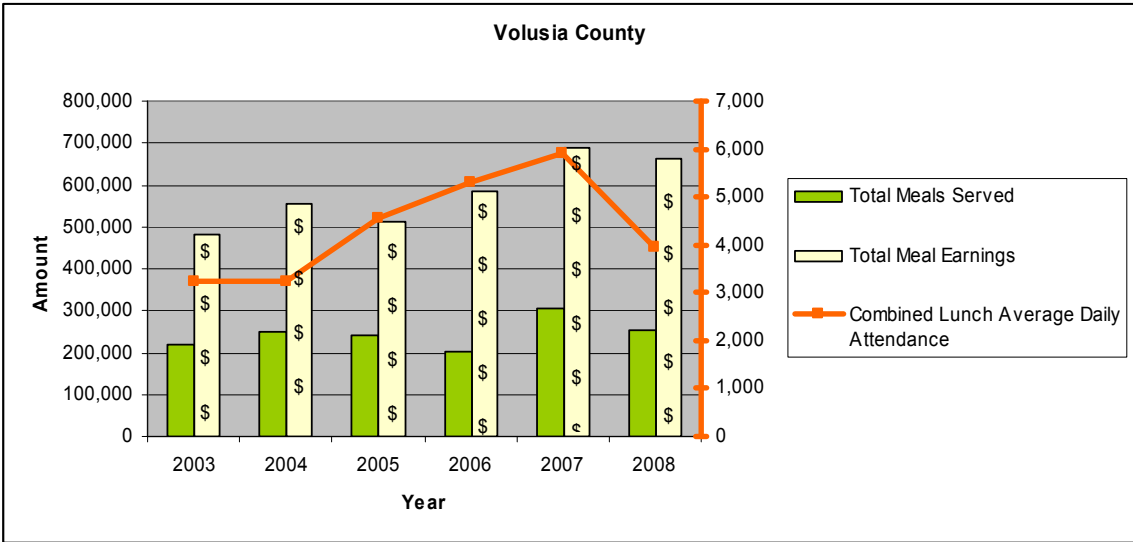
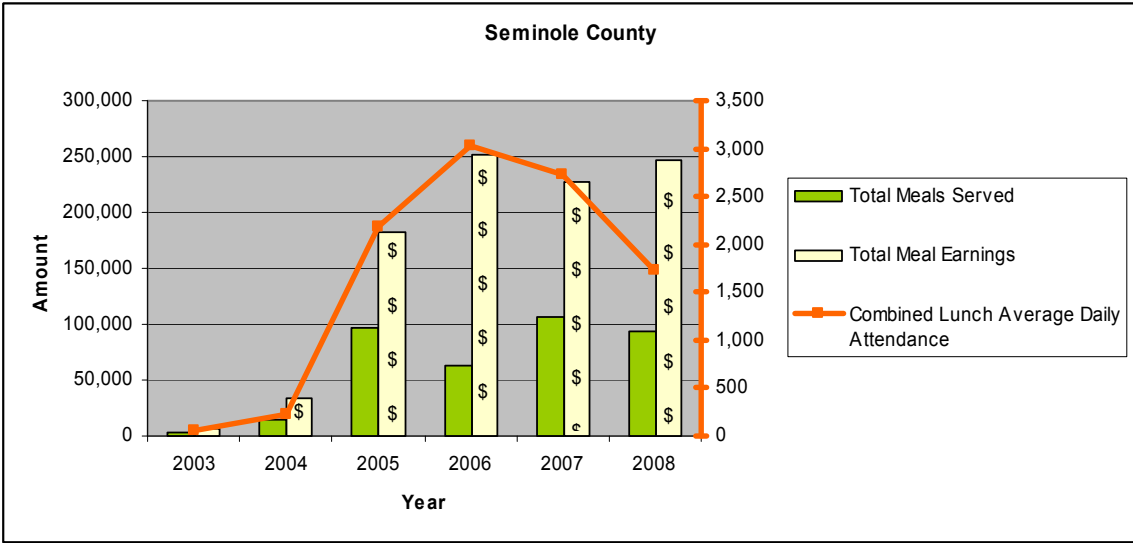
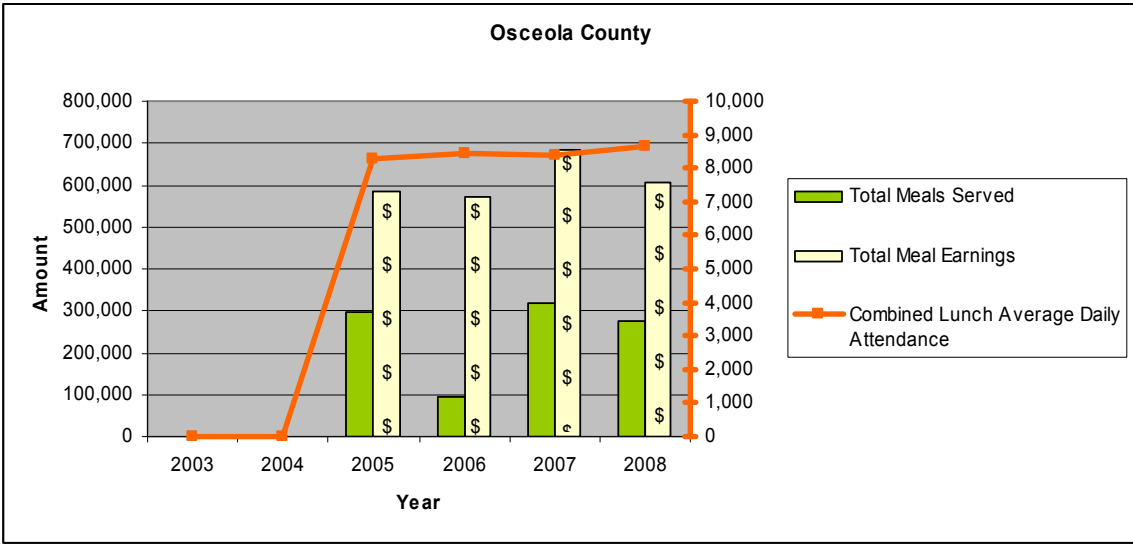
The SSFP (originally known as the Lugar Pilot) reduces paperwork and certain fiscal risks by sponsors (especially among the non-school sites), but it was only available in 26 states—Florida not being one. The structural changes afforded by the SSFP addressed those risks. With the simplified program, private, nonprofit sponsors would have less paperwork and the capacity for reinvesting any unused funds. If Florida had matched the growth of the states included in the original Lugar pilot, it is our estimate that an additional 205,300 Florida children would have received the healthy summer meals they needed in 2007, and the state would have collected an additional \$11.4 million in federal funding. To incorporate more states into the pilot, Congress would have to pass a budget increase, and that process started with the House Agriculture Appropriations Subcommittee and the Senate Finance Committee. Two of Florida's congressional delegates sat on these two committees, Congressman Allen Boyd and Senator Bill Nelson.

Florida Impact coordinated an in-person meeting for Congressman Boyd (a leader of the "Blue-Dog Democrats") and leaders from four of the counties included in his congressional district. These included business, religious, and community leaders that worked directly with summer food nutrition sites. In this meeting, the Congressman learned of the high drop-out rate of African-American males and the subsequent increased risk of incarceration without opportunities for safe, supervised settings during out-of-school time. The Summer Food Service Program provided these as well as enhancement programming and nutritious meals and snacks. When Congressman Boyd returned to Washington, he made the budget line item for SSFP expansion his earmark in the Agriculture Appropriations Committee. Using similar techniques with Senator Nelson—including a collective conference call of multi-sector leaders from around the state with the Senator—he publicly committed to signing on as a cosponsor of the Senate SSFP-expansion bill at a Franklin County Town Hall meeting. Funding for the expansion passed Congress, and the SSFP was applied in all 50 states last summer.

To view the effects the state and federal legislation had on local summer nutrition trends in just five Florida counties, Brevard, Orange, Osceola, Seminole, and Volusia, see the following charts:

Note: The 2008 decline may in part reflect the failing economy and state budget cuts leading to a perception by both public and private nonprofits of fiscal risks in maintaining SFSP sites.





Piloting Local Summer Food Marketing Strategies for Increased Participation in Central-Florida—

Policy successes like these led Florida Impact to its collaboration with Share Our Strength to establish the Florida Partnership to End Childhood Hunger. The Partnership serves as an anchor around which more than 50 organizations around the state are committed to working strategically and in concert to leverage more of the federal nutrition dollars and the Earned Income Tax Credits intended for but not reaching Florida's low-income families. The Partnership was launched in Orlando in October of 2007.

The WAG Act moved many counties to open new sites and all counties to keep them open longer. The SSFP expansion streamlined the program's operation for sponsors. But still there remain literally millions in federal entitlement dollars for Florida, if we could only get more children to the sites! For example, there were 191 sites in Orange County in 2008, but only 6,000 of the 95,000 children eligible for free and reduced-price school meals were getting the food. Many families go without due simply to a lack of awareness about this resource, which could be meeting a need that may be particularly acute now. Orange County alone presents an opportunity to leverage up to \$9 million in federal funds to feed children from low-income families over just one summer. Statewide that potential resource jumps to over \$111 million for just a few months of summer. As a nonprofit supported by charitable, private dollars, Florida Impact concentrates on leveraging this sizeable public commitment into Florida's communities and to the populations for whom it was intended. This is accomplished by removing barriers to access and conducting aggressive outreach.

In 2009 Florida Impact worked to further enhance the reach of the federal summer nutrition programs by turning its focus on marketing to families. After some encouragement from Florida Impact, the Florida Department of Education—modeling similar tools in Oregon and Texas—developed and maintained a web-based, searchable database, where parents could find the nearest summer nutrition sites to their homes. Florida Impact developed a comprehensive website that linked to this tool and other resources at www.summerfoodflorida.org. The Orlando Magic, Publix Super Markets, and the Dairy Farmers provided support for piloting strategies to publicize this resource and a toll-free, bilingual help-line (staffed by Florida Impact in Tallahassee) to Orange and a dozen nearby counties.

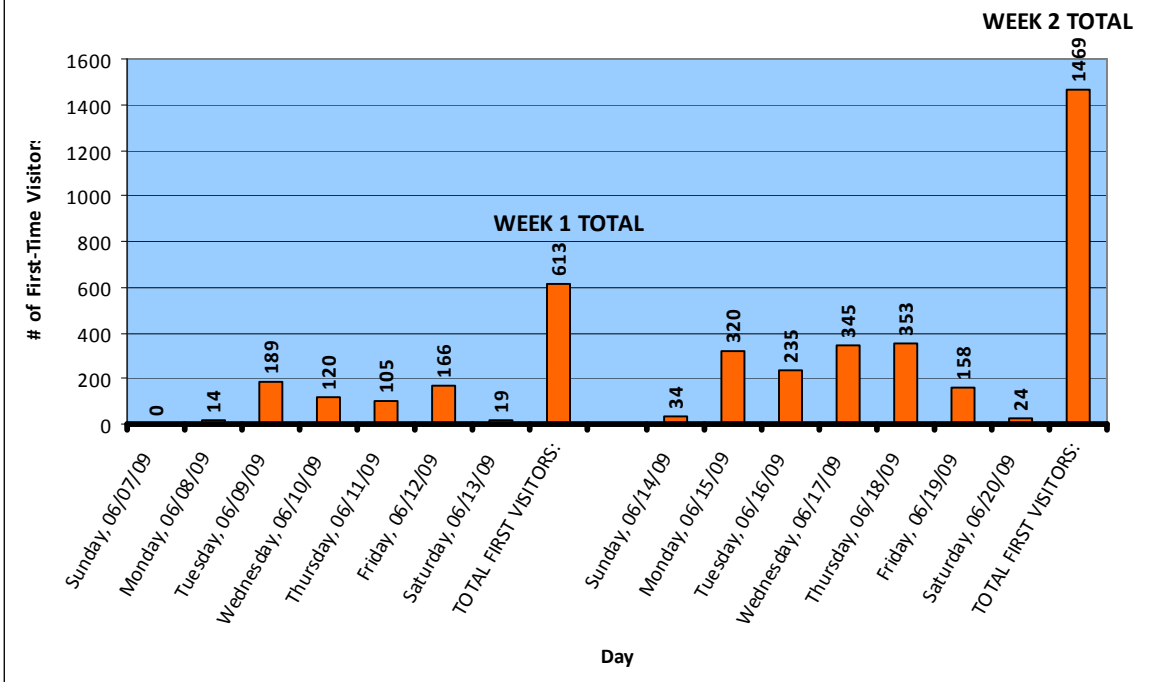
- The Orlando Magic underwrote all the costs associated with the production of a 30-second television ad featuring player Rashard Lewis and children from the Dr. J.B. Callahan Neighborhood Center.

- This public service announcement (PSA) aired throughout the summer on WKMG-TV (Channel 6-Orlando) and broadcast to Flagler, Volusia, Brevard, Orange, Osceola, Seminole, Lake, Marion, Sumter, and parts of Polk, Indian River, and Okeechobee counties. It was debuted during a prime-time, hour-long feature on the Orlando Magic the week the team was in the NBA Finals.
- Publix Super Markets underwrote paid television air time for the PSA and placed signage in 100 of their Orlando-area stores.
- 25,000 business cards in Spanish and English (<http://www.flimpact.org/sfsp/resources/posters/2009-BusinessCard.jpg>) were distributed to Orange and Osceola counties' Workforce and food stamp/Medicaid offices, county health/WIC departments, and the local food bank for distribution to clients.
- The Dairy Farmers underwrote the placement of signs inside selected buses and bus shelters that are part of the Orlando Metro Lynx routes.

The table on page 8 provides preliminary tracking of each marketing strategy for effectiveness with an eye towards expansion into other areas of the state next summer. The beginning of the PSA in the second week of the pilot more than doubled the number of unique, first-time visits to the summer food website. In the first couple of weeks, the hotline received over 500 unique callers requesting information about a site near them, and the summer food website (www.summerfoodflorida.org) received approximately 1,200 unique, first-time viewers each week.

**First Time Visitors to
WWW.SUMMERFOODFLORIDA.ORG**

First 2 Weeks



Unless otherwise noted, all data in this report was a part of the statistical compilation of *Feeding Florida 2009 – Responses to Hunger in the Sunshine State* which can be found in the “Current Publications” section at www.floridaimpact.org.

ⁱ Florida Department of Education, Survey 3 (2007-2008)

ⁱⁱ Florida Department of Education, CORE database

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