



Meals, activity a part of exciting summer program

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By: Ezra Mann

Every community comes up with its own way in any given school year to meet the needs of kids from meals to clothes.

However, as the last days of school approach, the concern can be how to help provide some kind of assistance during the summer months.

That's where the Garvin County Health Coalition and the Reynolds Recreation Center hope to step in with "X-Treme Summer Fun." The upcoming feeding and activity program is set for June and July.

"There hasn't been anything for the past couple of year," said McClain Garvin Youth and Family Center representative Betsy White. "The closet thing to this event was a feeding program offered by the school system a few years ago through a grant. So when this opportunity came to our attention we thought of course we'll do it."

Jennifer Samford, local parks and recreation director, noted that they got the idea for the feeding part after the Oklahoma Regional Food Bank approached them. They were told that no one in the county is doing a feeding program, something provided through the USDA.

"They said this is available and no one in Garvin County is taking advantage of it," said Samford. "We used to do an all-day summer day camp. This year we are not going to do that, we are going to facilitate this."

Pauls Valley far exceeded the qualification of having a certain percentage of kids on free and reduced lunches. What they are doing is modeled after something they saw in Okemah. It's similar in that it is a coalition of participants from the city to the individual level.

The plan is to start the first week, June 1-5. The program will take place every Monday through Friday at the Rec Center in Pauls Valley from 10:30 a.m.-1:30 p.m. The program will be open for those 4-18 years old and will feature daily activities like games and then lunch.

In order to offer it for free, the goal is to solicit donations from people in the community as well as businesses, according to Samford. She pointed out how they could be looking at least 100 kids every day.

In the end, one thing White wants to make clear is that this will not just be for those of lower incomes and that any kid in the age range are welcomed to participate. It's not just local kids either and anyone can come and be a part of it.

"The need is so significant in our county. That's such an exciting thing for our community. I am really impressed with the participation," said White.

To donate or to volunteer, call the Rec Center at (405) 238-1307 and ask for Jennifer or call (405) 527-2424 and ask for Betsy.