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Kid's Café

By Shari Parks

Although summer isn't officially here, a summer of fun, food, and friends kicks off Monday, June 2 at the Okemah Summer Kids Café. Open to all Okemah children and youth ages 1-15, this free program provides activities and lunch weekdays, June 2 through July 25 from 10:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. at Okemah Middle School. The Program is not income based. All students are welcome.

During the eight weeks the program is prepared to feed 250 kids each day and include activities based on an exciting theme each week. According to Program Director Jeremy Strickland some of the themes will include Color Your World, X-Treme Week, Wacky Week, and Around The World. Children will participate in games, arts and crafts as well as special activities, projects, and field trips which will range from a petting zoo, rock climbing wall, to days at the pool.

Summer Kids Café will also host a variety of quality performing artists recommended by the Oklahoma Arts Council.

Eight staff members along with numerous volunteers will prepare and serve food, lead activities, and transport children. All 4 staff employees who will be working directly with children are certified teachers with over 60 years combined experience working with students.

Strickland expressed his appreciation for programming support from the community. "It is exciting to see interagency collaboration with OSU Extension, Okmulgee/Okfuskee County Youth Services, Creek Nation, and Okfuskee County Health Department to provide valuable information for our children in a "hands on" focus," Strickland said.

The program is funded by the Regional Food Bank of Oklahoma and the Okemah community.

Leslie Vick who chairs the Okfuskee County Community Partnership Board, the initiating organization for the program said "We have had an amazing response from the community. With 456 children in the Okemah Schools receiving free and reduced breakfast and lunch during the school year, the community saw a need to provide meals for kids during the summer as well as a safe, fun place for all kids to gather. The result was a generous outpouring of financial support from individuals and businesses to fund the program."

Summer Kids Café is a partnership of the Okemah Public Schools, the Okemah Community Improvement Association, a 501(c)3 non profit; the Okfuskee County Community Partnership Board and the Regional Food Bank of Oklahoma.

Parents can enroll children at the Middle School Monday, June 2 at 10:30 a.m. For more information contact Jeremy Strickland at 918-399-1479 and follow us on Facebook at Summer Kids Café.