

Faith Based and Community Initiatives



USDA
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Agriculture

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St. Mark Community Center Child and Adult Care Food Program

How the Initiative is Helping.

St. Mark's began using SFSP for its summer school for the first time in 2004. Center employees were viewing a required video conference after winning a 21st Century Community Learning Center Grant, and after the video, staff with the Iowa Department of Education told them about the SFSP as part of the department's outreach initiatives. These efforts are an extension of the ongoing campaign coordinated by Food and Nutrition Service's (FNS) Mountain Plains Region to reach potential new partners by helping faith-based and community organizations become aware of opportunities to participate with FNS nutrition assistance programs. Bulk mailings, email messages, site visits, regular conference calls and meetings with state and local staff are all part of the effort to support and bring attention to the Faith-Based and Community Initiative.

In the course of coordinating efforts to highlight the center's new partnership with the State Department of Education and USDA's FNS in administering SFSP, the Regional Faith-based and Community Liaison facilitated efforts to expand the center's partnership to also include the administration of CACFP. This effort began in October 2004, and St. Marks Community Center now operates three at-risk snack programs through the CACFP, and plans to add two more sites.

"These programs are great," said program supervisor Brooke Gassman. "They are definitely meeting a need here."

The Organization.

The Center opened in 1988 with two programs for neighbors in the area. The center now has more than 40 programs offered at different times of the year. Programs focus on children, teens, families and senior citizens, and the goal of many of the programs is to empower people to help themselves.

Between 18,000 and 20,000 thousand people from infants to age 90+ use the center's programs annually. St. Mark Community Center is a non-profit organization with 501(c)(3) status. Primary funding is from churches, private individuals, local businesses and grants from various organizations.