



## Media Release

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**For Immediate Release**

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### **Human Services Kicks Off Afterschool Meals Program** *Program provides activities and meals for children while parents at work*

The Arkansas Department of Human Services (DHS) along with the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and Arkansas No Kid Hungry Campaign are working together to make sure no Arkansas child goes hungry and that everyone has a safe place to go after school. DHS hosted a kickoff event Thursday to raise awareness about the Afterschool Meals Program.

The event comes as part of a broader effort to end childhood hunger in Arkansas. Currently, more than one in four Arkansas children faces hunger. That's more than 200,000 children who are at risk of not having the nutrition they need to live healthy, active lives. In addition to meals, the children in afterschool programs are provided with educational and fun activities, such as arts and crafts, homework assistance, and life skills activities.

"This is just one more way we can fight hunger in Arkansas," said Buster Lackey, Health and Nutrition Program Administrator for the DHS Division of Childcare and Early Childhood Education. "Making sure these kids are fed and have a safe place to go after school could mean the difference between them succeeding and not succeeding."

Shawn Brown of "The Super Fun Show" entertained more than 400 children who attended the kickoff. Brown led the children in educational songs and dance. Representatives from USDA and No Kid Hungry spoke about the importance making sure every child has something to eat after school.

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“The Afterschool Meals Program is critically important in helping keep Arkansas kids healthy and ready to learn. For too many kids, it’s a long time between lunch and breakfast the next day,” said Patty Barker, Arkansas No Kid Hungry campaign director.

The afterschool programs are offered by public or private nonprofit organizations in areas where at least 50% of public school students are eligible for free or reduced-price lunch. The meals are nutritious, and providers are reimbursed for the cost by the USDA. For more information on how to participate, contact Buster Lackey at [William.lackey@arkansas.gov](mailto:William.lackey@arkansas.gov) or 1-501-320-8950 .