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Summer Meal Program Gets Boost with \$180,000 Grant for “Hungry for Happiness Council Bluffs”

*New Refrigerated truck, Expanded Access and Outreach to Help School District
Provide Meals to “Bridge the Gap”*

(Council Bluffs, Iowa--) Summer is a vulnerable time for children in Council Bluffs who rely on free or reduced-priced lunch programs during the school year through the National School Lunch Program. For many of these children, summer brings added stress, as they may not know where they will get their next meal. Due to this increase in food insecurity, children become at risk for poor nutrition and negative health outcomes. In the effort to fill the gap, the Council Bluffs Community School District participates in the federal Summer Food Service Program. However, in Council Bluffs and across Iowa, only about ten percent of eligible children actually participate in the summer meals program.

Today, the Arby's Foundation, Iowa West Foundation, Hunger Free Heartland and Council Bluffs Community Schools announced they have joined forces to launch the “Hungry for Happiness Council Bluffs” program with the goal of providing meals to bridge the gap.

“We are pleased to announce that a one-of-a-kind collaborative grant in the amount of \$180,000 from the national Arby's Foundation and the Iowa West Foundation will be provided to the Council Bluffs Schools as part of a five-year partnership to increase the number of children and families who participate in the summer meal program,” Andy D’Agosto, Arby's Foundation Trustee and metro-area Arby's franchise owner, said.

The Arby's Foundation's mission is to work with partners to end childhood hunger in America and to help ensure all children have access to wholesome food...every day.

"The Iowa West mission is to be a catalyst in meeting community needs," said Pete Tulipana, President and CEO of the Iowa West Foundation, "and this partnership with both national and local organizations is an exciting new way to address childhood hunger in our community". Tulipana explained that the Iowa West Foundation's contribution to the "collaborative initiative" is a one year \$60,000 start-up grant for the program.

"Thanks to this unique partnership, a refrigerated food truck for the Council Bluffs Community School District is making it possible to expand the outreach to children by adding an outdoor site to the places children can access a free lunch," Virginia Bechtold, supervisor of nutrition services for the Council Bluffs Schools, said. "The Broadway Skatepark and playground is a central place where teenagers as well families gather for summer recreation."

According to Bechtold, the Council Bluffs Parks & Recreation department provided picnic tables and will be working with the partners to use grant funds to build a permanent shelter at the park for future use. There are nine other sites where the Council Bluffs Community School District provides free lunch meals. A few sites also serve free breakfast. These sites, addresses and meal hours are available on the district's website at www.cb-schools.org.

"In addition to the truck, the partnership grant is making it possible to provide meals to the adults who accompany their children to the summer meal program," Bechtold said. "Although the federal Summer Lunch Program does not reimburse meal providers for adult meals, we know that the funding provided to feed parents and guardians will help draw families to the program."

According to Council Bluffs Schools superintendent Martha Bruckner, this collaborative effort is another example of leading community organizations supporting children and their well-being and achievement.

"We know that children who are properly nourished and active are healthier and better prepared to learn," Bruckner said. "We are excited to see this program grow to serve more children and help us lessen the achievement gap."

The Arby's Foundation's national "Hungry for Happiness Mobile Tour" will be making two stops in the Omaha-Council Bluffs metropolitan area on July 11 and 12, 2013. This will provide a mid-summer reminder of the summer meal programs offered in the Omaha and Council Bluffs area.

About the Arby's Foundation

The Arby's Foundation, whose mission is to end childhood hunger in America, is the charitable arm of Arby's Restaurant Group, Inc. Building on a philanthropic heritage that has contributed more than \$57 million to child-related causes since its inception in 1986, the Arby's Foundation has launched a bold new movement to educate, mobilize and empower Americans with the knowledge and resources needed to ensure food security for every single child. With more than 16.7 million U.S. children—*more than 1 in 5*—facing hunger daily, the Arby's Foundation has devoted its resources to providing education and access to wholesome food choices for children across the country. The Arby's Foundation is a registered 501 (c) (3) organization headquartered in Atlanta, Georgia. To learn more, visit www.arbysfoundation.org.

About the Iowa West Foundation

The Iowa West Foundation is a private foundation headquartered in Council Bluffs (IA) and it is one of the largest foundations in the Midwest. Iowa West's grant program began in 1996, and recently the Foundation surpassed the \$300 million milestone of grant making in the southwest Iowa and eastern Nebraska region. Foundation grants are funded from its investment income, as well as from the Iowa West Racing Association, which receives fee income from casino operators – Ameristar and Harrah's. For more information on the Iowa West Foundation visit www.iowawestfoundation.org.

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