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## MEETING COMMUNITY NEED: ADDRESSING FOOD INSECURITY

For nearly 170 years, the Y has remained committed to helping people and communities in times of crisis. Right now, while adhering to local health and safety guidelines, many Ys nationwide are providing critical emergency services such as child care for health care workers and first responders, food for children and teens and shelter for individuals without a home. As one of the nation's largest nonprofits focused on strengthening communities, helping people in need is foundational to the Y's mission. And when this crisis is over, the Y will continue to be there to help our communities recover.

### The Y Feeds Kids

Amid COVID-19 (coronavirus)-related school closures and economic uncertainty, a rapidly **increasing number of children and teens do not have access to food**. In response, more than 1,000 Ys and Y-affiliated food distribution sites across the nation are safely providing free grab-and-go meals to young people 18 and under to help address the serious issue of food insecurity. Below are a few examples of how the Y is responding to families and communities in need. For more information, contact Stacey McDaniel, Anti-Hunger Initiatives Specialist, YMCA of the USA, at [Stacey.McDaniel@ymca.net](mailto:Stacey.McDaniel@ymca.net).

### The YMCA of Centre County Is Providing Healthy Meals On-The-Go

Across seven school districts, the **YMCA of Centre County** in Pennsylvania is activating their Travelin' Table Mobile Meal Distribution to provide at least a thousand meals a day to kids who are now without the food usually provided through their schools. The Y has converted their closed facilities into ad hoc food storage warehouses so that they can easily **supply food to their 32 drive-through sites**.

"Last week, as we prepared to temporarily close our facilities to the public, we knew we needed to act quickly to provide support for the new set of challenges our community would face," said Mel Curtis, director of the Moshannon Valley YMCA Branch. "In a matter of days, we gathered the resources to begin distributing food to kids in need."

Collaboration is key, and the Y has engaged their entire community in the effort to feed kids. Veteran's clubs have offered to prepare meals, members of fraternal organizations have offered to volunteer, local businesses have placed donation containers in their offices, local restaurants have

contributed their excess food and fire stations throughout the county have agreed to serve as drive-through locations for distributing meals. Organizers of a cancelled Easter egg hunt even donated 8,000 eggs to help feed kids!

In addition to the mobile meals, the Y is also providing major food distribution for families at their Moshannon Valley Branch, packing family bags so children have enough food over the weekends and offering drive-through soup delivery for veterans and seniors.

For more information and news coverage, see [State College News](#); [Centre Daily Times](#); [WJAC](#) or [Lock Haven Express](#).



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### The YMCA of Greater Boston is Feeding and Caring for Children

According to Boston Public Schools (BPS), 78% of BPS students qualify for free- or discounted lunch. COVID-19-related school closures have created a significant food security gap for Boston youth. Fortunately, the YMCA of Greater Boston is working with the City of Boston, Project Bread and other community partners to prevent hunger by distributing two meals each day to youth across the city. In the first three weeks since closing its facility to provide emergency child care for essential workers and vulnerable children, the YMCA of Greater Boston delivered over **138,000 meals** to children and families.



"The YMCA of Greater Boston is stepping up in real time, during a real crisis to listen and serve and put people first," said James Morton, President and CEO of the YMCA of Greater Boston.

For more information and news coverage, see [Video 1](#) of outreach (March 24); [Video 2](#) (March 31); [Daily Free Press](#) or [City of Boston Website](#).

### The YMCA of Memphis & the Mid-South Takes Over Food Program for School District



The Shelby County Schools District made the challenging decision to suspend its free meal program after a school nutritionist contracted COVID-19. This put 100,000 students in the school district—the largest in Tennessee— at risk of food insecurity. The YMCA of Memphis & the Mid-South stepped up to fill the gap. The YMCA took over food distribution for the district, **running 62 meal sites** where students are also given learning activities to help combat learning loss during school closures. Since the pandemic began, the Y has **served 279,569 meals**.

"No child should ever go hungry," said Jerry Martin, CEO of YMCA of Memphis & the Mid-South. "The Y is there at the times of greatest need to make sure all kids are safe, healthy, and fed."

For more information and news coverage, see [YMCA of Memphis Website](#) with food distribution locations; [Daily Memphian](#); [Commercial Appeal](#); [WMC Action 5 News](#) or [Fox 13](#).

### The YMCA of Greater Kalamazoo and Sherman Lake YMCA Join Forces to Fight Hunger

When Michigan schools closed in response to COVID-19, the YMCA of Greater Kalamazoo responded by delivering more than 300 meals and snacks per day to kids in Kalamazoo County. Starting April 1, the Y is partnering with Sherman Lake YMCA to expand their outreach and provide **1,000 meals and snacks a day** to kids in Michigan. Working together, the Sherman Lake YMCA will utilize their kitchen facilities to support the higher volume of meals being produced, and the YMCA of Greater Kalamazoo will utilize their converted bus for deliveries. Local grocers, suppliers and food pantries are helping provide food, and the Y is receiving additional support from partners in government and philanthropy.



"Our goal and that of the Sherman Lake YMCA is to make sure our families survive this crisis. And it starts with making sure children and families don't go hungry," said Ben Davis, Chief Advancement Officer of the YMCA of Greater Kalamazoo. "The Y has continually tried to identify and meet critical community needs. It's part of our DNA as an organization to be nimble and adaptable in identifying community needs and trying to meet them."

"It's been humbling to see the many ways the greater Kalamazoo and Battle Creek areas have stepped up to keep each other safe and healthy. The Sherman Lake YMCA is proud to be part of that effort and thankful to have a great partner in the Kalamazoo YMCA," said Sherman Lake YMCA CEO Zach Klipsch. "Together we will continue to do whatever we can to help our community, just like we have in the past and as we will into the future."

For more information and news coverage, see [YMCA of Greater Kalamazoo Website](#); [Sherman Lake YMCA Website](#) or [Second Wave Media](#).

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### The YMCA of Metropolitan Chattanooga Offers Grab & Go Meals Across 70 Sites

Almost 60,000 students in Hamilton County schools rely upon the free or discounted meals they receive at school. With school closures related to COVID-19, many of those students may not have access to a healthy breakfast or lunch. To fill the gap, the YMCA of Metropolitan Chattanooga assembled a cross-departmental team to prepare over **1,000 Grab & Go meals daily to be distributed at 25 area sites** – including Walmart stores, YMCA locations and Housing Authority complexes – as well as approximately 90 school bus stops. The effort is a partnership with Hamilton County Department of Education, Walmart and other community partners. The North Georgia Community YMCA branch alone prepared 888 weekend meals in one weekend to deliver to students along county bus routes.



“As the YMCA has adjusted to meet the needs of the community, our first focus was to address the food insecure youth,” said Laura Horne, senior program director for the J.A. Henry Community YMCA. “Our Food Program team was able to quickly come together with our community partners to address the heightened need with the unexpected school closures. It has been remarkable to see our staff and volunteers really step into living out the Y mission in our communities.”

For more information and news coverage, see [Chattanooga](#); [Chattanooga Times Free Press](#) or [ABC WTVC](#).

### The YMCA of Rome & Floyd County Delivers 2,400 Meals

On any given day, the YMCA of Rome & Floyd County in Georgia usually provides about 100 meals for kids in need. On Thursday, March 26, **the Y delivered 2,400 meals**—all to help combat food insecurity because of COVID-19-related school closures. The Y used their mobile bus to deliver across the county. They also partnered with a vendor to create a pop-up food market at the Y’s soccer fields, where 500 boxes and bags of food were given to the community.



“Our community partners asked us to step up and help with meal distribution in our underserved communities, and care for children of frontline hospital workers,” said Stephanie McElhone, community development director at the YMCA of Rome and Floyd County. “We understand that it is a calculated risk for our staff, but we could not stand by and permit children to go hungry or families to be traumatized by their lack of options.”

**For more information** on how Ys are addressing food insecurity across the nation, contact Stacey McDaniel, Anti-Hunger Initiatives Specialist, YMCA of the USA, at [Stacey.McDaniel@ymca.net](mailto:Stacey.McDaniel@ymca.net) or visit [www.ymca.net](http://www.ymca.net).

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