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PRESS RELEASE

### **Norfolk Public Schools serves more than 318,000 free meals during pandemic**

NORFOLK, NE — More than 318,000 free meals have been served to the children and families of the Norfolk community since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. These meals have been prepared and distributed through the food service program at Norfolk Public Schools. The innovations that made that possible will help NPS and their school food service provider, Lunchtime Solutions, continue to serve healthy meals to students into the new school year.

“We are very proud of the partnership between Lunchtime Solutions and NPS that made this possible for the youth of Norfolk,” said Bill Robinson, Associate Superintendent and Director of Business Services.

When the COVID-19 pandemic shut down Norfolk’s school buildings, Robinson said that Food Service Director Melissa Davis and her team immediately started planning with school district officials.

“Everyone on the team wanted to do everything possible to ensure that no young person in Norfolk would be hungry during this unexpected closure,” he said. “Within three days of our announcement on March 16th that NPS buildings would be closed, the Lunchtime team was serving nutritious grab-and-go meals to Norfolk families in a safe, drive-thru manner.”

Norfolk served 5 breakfast and 5 lunches each week with distribution on Wednesday from 10 AM to 1 PM. These “grab-and-go-meals” were available because the USDA granted schools waivers through August 31 to run the Summer Food Service Program, which is universally free for children ages 0-18. Lunchtime Solutions worked with their districts to offer innovative solutions that made picking up the meals more convenient and safe for families, including multiple meals provided at once and neighborhood delivery.

“This was not like the typical summer feeding programs where a few hundred kids may come through in a day, we are in some cases talking thousands,” said Tammy Coyle, Vice President of Operations for Lunchtime Solutions. “It truly was a team effort to turn our regular program served in the lunchroom into a 100 percent take-out-based option, almost overnight.”

Based in North Sioux City, SD, Lunchtime Solutions partners with 51 districts to manage their food service programs, ranging in size from over 4,000 students to under 200. Those districts together have served 2.3 million free meals to their students since Mid-March.

Coming into the fall semester, Lunchtime Solutions has worked with NPS and its other districts to provide serving solutions that fit each location’s needs, Coyle said.

“Our teams will continue to successfully adapt our programs as situations change,” she said. “We could never do this without the dedicated staff who work these programs with the help of school district staff and volunteers. Providing nutritious meals to children who may otherwise not have them is very important to us, and we know it is to the schools and communities we serve, as well.”