

August 28, 2023

Greetings!



Wow! Another year of “Now That’s What I’m Talking About!” – Summer Lunch program has come to a close. Not just another year, but our **fifth** year of providing lunches to children! In the past few months, we provided 13,102 lunches to children in Geauga County. This brings our total to 49,839 meals provided in 5 years! An amazing accomplishment that would not have been possible without you!

### **During the off Season**

Beginning work on next year’s lunch program begins as soon as the lunch program comes to an end. Ideas are being tossed around among us before the current year’s program even ends.

Between last summer and this summer, we held a:

- **Scavenger Hunt** – This past November we held a fall theme scavenger hunt where the participants took selfies with their interpretation of the words taken from fall sports. Afterwards everyone gathered at the Chardon VFW for a Tailgate Party/Dinner.
- **Count Down To Christmas** – Each day on social media, a different item was posted that we could use for the lunch program. Items included lunch bags, cookie sheets, roasters, sandwich bags, etc. Almost all our Christmas wish list was fulfilled!
- **Snow Day** – On President’s Day in February, we held a party in the Claridon Town Hall with snow games, snow activities and snow themed crafts. Unfortunately, there was no snow outside.

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**440-321-5596    [www.CommunityHelps.org](http://www.CommunityHelps.org)**  
*Claridon Community Helps is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization*

- **One Day Food Drive** – On May 5<sup>th</sup>, we held a Food Drive within almost all the schools within the county. The families were very, very generous and we received an abundance of shelf stable items. The items that were donated that we wouldn't be using, we divided up and sent home to families participating in the lunch program.
- **The Ask** – Many, many filled the financial need to make this year's program another success!

## **Lunch Itself**

Every Monday, Wednesday and Friday we prepare a hot lunch for the children. We arrive at Claridon Congregational Church at 9. At 11 o'clock we start filling the lunch tins donated by University Hospital Geauga, so that the delivery drivers can head out the door at 11:30.

One of the favorite hot meals we prepare is buffalo chicken mac-n-cheese. This meal was easy to prepare with the chicken New Mercies Church cannery donated to us. We would serve it with a fresh salad from Great Lakes Growers. As a matter of fact, we served a fresh salad every Friday courtesy of Great Lakes Growers.

Some of the other hot meals we served were cheeseburgers, nachos, breakfast for lunch, sloppy joes and tator tot casserole. Each of those hot meals always came with a homemade cookie fresh from the oven. And fresh milk from Rowdy Cow Creamery at Hastings Dairy.

On Monday and Wednesday, we also prepared a brown bag lunch for Tuesday and Thursday. We feed the children Monday through Friday, but we only deliver their lunch three days a week.

The brown bag lunches are the same thing every Tuesday and Thursday. It includes a meat and cheese sandwich, fruit, yogurt, and a granola bar. To spice things up a little once a week we would include different surprises. It may have been a scavenger hunt, a little note, what National Day it was with information and the item, a surprise wacky or wonderful toy from Operation Homefront or art supplies from A Kid at Art for the Heart just to name a few.

## **Shopping**

Shopping each week is not just running into the grocery store and picking up whatever items we might need for lunch that week. It requires forethought as to what we will be serving in two weeks. The food order is dropped off one week to be picked up next week and used the upcoming week. It also requires space in our refrigerators, which also requires planning.

Shopping also requires money. Fortunately, we have wonderful businesses, churches, individuals, organizations, and grants that support our efforts. When combined, we make ends meet.

## **Good Story**

During the fifth week of the summer lunch program, we also reached 5,000 lunches that week. It seemed like the perfect opportunity to celebrate our 5<sup>th</sup> year. We recognized Julie Sollars, LuAnn Burger and Tristyn Burger for being a part of the program from Day One.

That week I asked Judah DuRoss, grandson of Gordon Austin (the bitmoji in our logo), if he would come out and make a video of what we do and in celebration of our fifth year? Without hesitation, he said yes.

Fast forward to the end of July. Each week I work with Dave Stang, the treasurer of Claridon Community Helps, to see how much money we have left. Will we have enough money to finish the summer? Will we have enough money to pay the phone bill and the insurance bill? After all, each week we would spend approximately \$2,000 on food to prepare lunch for 250 children a day. (We would have spent more each week, but we received a lot of meat and lunch meat from the local food pantries and as I said before chicken from New Mercies church.)

I've gone through the food still left on the shelves and in the freezer. I came up with what meals we would be serving for the last three weeks of the program. I figured out how much all of this would cost. We were not going to have enough money. I believed in the people in our community. I knew if I made people aware of the situation, they would absolutely come through.

Thursday night after dinner, I sat down at the computer to share on social media this information. It is raining outside. In the middle of me typing the electricity goes out.

Friday evening, I am not home to make the post. I decided to make the post on Sunday evening as that is when people are unwinding from the weekend and catching up on social media.

Late Sunday afternoon, Judah sends me his finished video from weeks before. I watched the video, and I cried happy tears. I also knew that it had arrived at the perfect time for me to add to the social media post.

I posted the video and my request to social media on Sunday evening. Just as I believed would happen, all the money we needed to finish the year was donated and more! I even had churches and organizations ask if I needed them to make another donation to finish the year. I happily replied, no, members of the community blessed us just as I knew they would.

If you aren't on social media and missed watching the video Judah DuRoss made visit YouTube and search Claridon Community Summer Lunch. Or visit <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3hpqpEBf8-k&t=24s>.

## **In Closing**

Thank you for making a difference in the lives of so many children in Geauga County! Together we have accomplished more than I ever dreamed. Thank you for believing in me and in our lunch program.

With heartfelt thanks,

Judi Maloney, Program Director

*Follow us on Facebook* – Now That's What I'm Talking About Summer Lunch  
*Follow us on Instagram* – Claridon Community Helps

### *Upcoming Events:*

Basket Raffle & Bake Sale – September 16 at Claridon Town Hall, 12:30 – 3:00  
Cheers to 5 Years Scavenger Hunt & Dinner – Saturday, November 11  
Solar Eclipse PreParty Breakfast – Saturday, April, 6