

Claridon Community Helps
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Greetings!

Wow! Another year of "Now That's What I'm Talking About!" – Summer Lunch, a Claridon Community Helps program. In the past few months, we surpassed many milestones. The first milestone we surpassed was 100,000 lunches since we began the program in 2019. Second, we surpassed the record high number of 18,630 lunches we provided in 2025. Finally, we surpassed 25,000 meals in the hands of children in one year. Our final number was 25,939 meals provided to children in Geauga County just this past summer! An amazing accomplishment that would not have been possible without you!

The first half of the summer we were providing lunch on average to 478 children a day. (The second half of summer always slows down just a little. And by a little I mean we were providing 430 children lunch each day.) This means on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday mornings we prepare a hot lunch for the children. On Monday and Wednesday, we also prepare a brown bag lunch for the children to have for Tuesday and Thursday. Therefore, on Monday we would prepare 478 hot meals and 478 brown bag lunches. In one day, in 2 ½ hours, 956 meals would go out the door. Repeat again on Wednesday. Then on Friday it was an easy day, as we 'only' made a hot meal. This was not premade food that we just reheated. This was homemade food served with a homemade cookie each day.

This past summer we purchased two single-door commercial refrigerators for the purpose of putting the milk in each week when it is delivered. At the end of July, we also purchased a single-door commercial freezer.

As Murphy's Law would have it, 2 weeks later our 3-year-old commercial single-door freezer quit without me noticing. Half of the food in that freezer

had thawed, so we threw it away. The other half was still frozen; we saved that food by rearranging the new freezer and putting it in there. The appliance repair came out last week and the parts should be in this week to fix the old freezer.

In the kitchen this past summer, we were running at capacity. Next year we will not be able to add any children to the lunch program. That does not set well with any of us. A few of the solutions we have thrown around are:

- Having a professional come out and look at the kitchen and suggest how we could arrange it (with Claridon Congregational Church's approval of course) to be more efficient.
- In May, make and freeze meals. These meals would be passed out to the older children we provide lunch to, for them to reheat.
- I have always told my children there is a difference between need and want. Our lunch program is for all children, no questions asked. We only collect a child's name, age and food allergies. Do we add a line to the registration form asking if it is a need or a want? And if we have too many children registered, we cut those families that say they want it? This also doesn't set well, because a family may not 'need' it, but 'want' it to alleviate some financial/mental stress.
- Having another organization duplicate our program on west side of the county to cover that area.

Do you have any other ideas? We would love to hear them. Moving locations is not an option.

Together we are making a difference in the lives of so many families in Geauga County! We have planted the seed of giving within the child. We have relieved a little bit of stress on families without any barriers or criteria. We live in an amazing community!

Thank you again for your support!

Judi Maloney, Program Director