



December 2, 2024

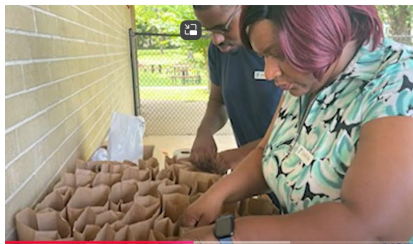
## USDA SERO Features Happy Helpings Testimonials

### Happy Helpings Keeps Children Happy and Fed at Boys & Girls Clubs of Central Georgia

Nutrition Services partnered with the Boys and Girls Clubs of Central Georgia to host a Happy Helpings Kick-off event this summer. Members of the USDA FNS Southeast Regional Office (SERO) were also in attendance. Activities for the day combined good nutrition with fun physical activities.



In this video, learn how youth appreciate the delicious healthy food at the Boys and Girls Club. Click [here](#) to watch.



### Successful Summer Meals Season at YMCA in Thomasville

Summer meals are always exciting for youth across the Southeast region and across our nation. The YMCA of Thomasville is one of many Happy Helpings sponsors that provides meals to children in the Peach State.

In fact, the facility distributes food to more than 30 sites in Thomas County. Center officials credit the partnership between USDA and The Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning, with being able to provide hot meals to children who may otherwise be hungry.

Click [here](#) to watch the video to learn how important this program is for parents and youth, in addition to the heartfelt support from YMCA employees.

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## DECAL to Award up to \$1,650,000 in Community Impact Grants

*Deadline to Apply: December 20*

The Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning (DECAL) announced funding opportunities aimed at closing opportunity gaps and creating long-term positive outcomes for Georgia children from birth to 8 and their families. 501(c)(3) non-profit organizations, school systems, and government entities that are in good standing with DECAL are invited to apply by **Friday December 20, 2024, at 5:00 p.m.**

All grants will be for a term of 24 months, from March 1, 2025, through February 28, 2027. The Requests for Proposals (RFP) for the three grants are available below. **An**

informational webinar will be held at 3:00 p.m. on December 2, 2024. Please register [here](#).

**RFP for 2Gen Innovation Grants for Student Parent Success (up to \$75,000 each): 2025 - 2027 2Gen Innovation Grants for Student Parent Success - Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning.** This funding opportunity will launch or expand innovative strategies that bridge early learning with secondary, postsecondary, and workforce systems at the local level. These grants are designed to support the implementation of two-generation (2Gen) strategies that enhance children's access to high-quality early education while also improving parents' ability to secure family-supporting jobs, thereby fostering greater economic security.

**RFP for 2Gen Community Literacy Grants (up to \$75,000 each) : 2025 - 2027 2Gen Community Literacy Grants - Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning.** This funding will enhance literacy by supporting programs that benefit both children and their parents or caregivers using a two-generation (2Gen) approach to address educational needs within families. These grants fund initiatives that focus on improving literacy skills across generations, often incorporating adult education, early childhood education, and family engagement strategies to create a supportive learning environment.

**RFP for Community Transformation Grants (up to \$125,000 each) : 2025 - 2027 Community Transformation Grants - Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning.** This funding opportunity will support projects that increase access to early childhood services and resources. This grant program is designed to address the unique needs of local populations by building partnerships that will create and implement innovative, responsive projects that address specific early childhood gaps and challenges faced by families in their areas.

Questions regarding these funding opportunities may be submitted to [communityimpactgrants@dec.al.ga.gov](mailto:communityimpactgrants@dec.al.ga.gov) until 5:00 p.m. on December 20, 2024. When submitting your question(s), please include the type of Community Impact Grant you are inquiring about.

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## Happy Helpings Reconciliation is Past Due

### *Annual Year-End Reconciliation Requirement for FY2024*

Institutions operating FY2024 Happy Helpings Summer Food Program (May 2024- Aug 2024) must complete an Annual Reconciliation Form. **The form was due October 31.**

If you haven't already done so, please submit the requested documents ASAP to avoid any delays in FY2025 Happy Helpings approval.

The reconciliation form and supporting financial documentation should be submitted together to [nutritionbudget@dec.al.ga.gov](mailto:nutritionbudget@dec.al.ga.gov). **Include the name of the institution and agreement number in the subject line of the email.**

Please review the [reconciliation form](#) and [instructions](#).  
Contact the budget team at [nutritionbudget@dec.al.ga.gov](mailto:nutritionbudget@dec.al.ga.gov) with any questions.

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## Get an Early Start on Summer 2025

### *Start Planning Now*

Providing summer meals is a year-round effort. At any point throughout the year, there are things you can do to prepare for next summer.

#### **December:**

- Begin to determine which sites are returning, explore new site options, and meet with community partners.

- Plan site staff training, meal production and delivery, and programs and activities.
- Continue exploring the potential for serving mobile meals.
- Continue developing a marketing and outreach campaign.
- Develop a plan for the Food Service Permitting process, if applicable.

## Target Counties for Summer 2025

One of Nutrition Services' goals is to have a meal site in every county of the state. Last summer, you played a crucial role in our significant progress toward that goal by expanding meal service to 103 counties in 2024! Thank you!

If your organization has the capacity to expand your meal service in 2025, please consider serving meals and snacks in any of the following target counties:




### FY25 Target Counties: 56

1. Atkinson	13. Crisp	25. Jeff Davis	37. Oglethorpe	49. Twiggs
2. Bacon	14. Dade	26. Jenkins	38. Pierce	50. Upson
3. Banks	15. Dawson	27. Jones	39. Pulaski	51. Webster
4. Berrien	16. Dodge	28. Lincoln	40. Quitman	52. Wheeler
5. Bleckley	17. Dooley	29. Long	41. Schley	53. Wilcox
6. Brantley	18. Echols	30. Lumpkin	42. Screven	54. Wilkes
7. Brooks	19. Forsyth	31. Madison	43. Stewart	55. Wilkinson
8. Camden	20. Gilmer	32. Marion	44. Sumter	56. Worth
9. Charlton	21. Gordon	33. Miller	45. Taylor	
10. Chattahoochee	22. Grady	34. Montgomery	46. Telfair	
11. Cook	23. Haralson	35. Murray	47. Towns	
12. Crawford	24. Harris	36. Oconee	48. Treutlen	



## Unanticipated School Closure Waivers Available

On August 5, 2024, Nutrition Services received USDA approval for statewide waivers for Happy Helpings sponsors to utilize during unanticipated school closures.

The following waivers are available during unanticipated school closures when meal service operations are limited due to natural disasters, unscheduled major building repairs, court orders relating to school safety or other issues, labor-management disputes, or when approved by the State agency for similar unanticipated causes.

The following approved waivers are available when schools are closed with no virtual learning/classes:

- **Non-Congregate Meal Service**
- **Parent and Guardian Meal Pick-up**
- **Meal Service Times**
- **Service of Meals at School Sites**

The waivers listed above are available through **June 30, 2025**.

Once approved by Nutrition Services' Applications Unit to operate during unanticipated school closures, Happy Helpings sponsors interested in applying for the above-mentioned waivers must submit waiver requests via the Waiver Module within GA ATLAS.

Sponsors may only serve meals in a non-congregate setting, adjust the time of meal service, allow parent pick up, and allow service of meals at non-school sites once the sponsors are approved for the waivers.

Waivers cannot be approved for more than 10 consecutive operating days without approval from Food and Nutrition Service (FNS). In situations that may warrant longer approval periods, the FNS Southeast Regional Office (SERO) will work closely with Nutrition Services to determine if an extension is needed.

For questions, please reach out to Robyn Parham at [robyn.parham@dec.al.ga.gov](mailto:robyn.parham@dec.al.ga.gov).

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## Upcoming Training and Technical Assistance

### NCA Webinar – Summer Meals Summit

The [National CACFP Sponsor Association](#) is hosting a summit on December 5, 2024, to discuss how your organization can advance access to healthy meals for communities when school is out of session by participating in USDA summer meal programs, learn from community members on the ground about their experience and get their advice on how to start or improve your experience as a sponsoring organization or service site.

Register to learn the basics of the program and get resources to transform summer nutrition in your neighborhood and help ensure no child goes hungry when school is out.

***Earn up to 4.5 hours of CEUs for attending. Can't make it to a live session?***

***Registration includes on-demand viewing through December 12, 2024. [\[Learn More\]](#)***

### December 10, 2024 – Tuesday Tip! It's Snack Time!

**1:30 - 2:00 pm**

Do you need a quick refresher on serving snacks in the Happy Helpings?

Join this webinar to learn meal pattern requirements on incorporating creditable snacks into your meal service.

***Participants can earn one half [0.5] state-approved hour for attending this training in its entirety.***

**[\[Register Now\]](#)**

### December 16, 2024- Memo Monday

**10:00 am-12:00 pm**

Have you heard about the new meal pattern updates for the next fiscal year? Do you have questions about what changes will be made that are associated with Happy Helpings? Would you like to serve credible smoothies in your Happy Helpings Program?

Please join this webinar for a deeper dive into the following memos:

- [Meal Pattern Updates due to 2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans- June 28, 2024](#)
- [Geographic Preference Expansion Related to the Final Rule titled, Child Nutrition Programs: Meal Patterns Consistent With the 2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans- May 22, 2024](#)
- [Smoothies Offered in Child Nutrition Programs with Questions and Answers- June 28, 2024](#)

**[\[Register Now\]](#)**

Notes: This is a two-step process:

- Step 1: After registering in GA ATLAS, you will receive a Training Confirmation email immediately from Georgia DECAL Help Desk -[helpdesk@cnpus.com](mailto:helpdesk@cnpus.com) with a registration link to attend the webinar (**check your spam/junk folder**).
- Step 2: You must then register for the training using the link provided on the Training confirmation e-mail.
- If you should have an issue with registering, please contact Leslie Truman prior to the day of training.



- [Click here](#) if you need a refresher on how to register for training in GA ATLAS.

## Happy Helpings GA Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) Training

Do you plan to serve summer meals during the FY 2024-2025 program year? If so, please plan to participate in **one (1)** of the upcoming HH SFSP Orientation and Program Training sessions.

### Happy Helpings SFSP Experienced Sponsor Training (1 Day- Virtual)

- February 5, 2025
- February 26, 2025

[\[Register Now\]](#)

**Please note:** Only the Program Contact (PC) can self-register within GA ATLAS. If an additional person will be attending, please contact Leslie Truman, Administrative Assistant, at [leslie.truman@decal.ga.gov](mailto:leslie.truman@decal.ga.gov) or (404) 657-1779 for assistance.

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## Training Resources

### *In Case You Missed It: Webinar Recordings Now Available!*

If you missed a webinar, please visit the [Training and Technical Assistance](#) webpage for previously recorded webinars.

This month's training highlight is the [Local Procurement Standard & Sourcing Training](#) webinar. It discussed detailed information on procurement principles for acquiring local foods as a child nutrition program operator, along with updates on the final rule regarding geographic preferences.

### Summer Meals for Kids: Site Finder

- USDA FNS's Summer Meals Site Finder was developed to help children, families, and others quickly and easily find summer meal sites near them. The site finder is a free, web-based application that also works on tablets, smartphones, and other mobile devices. Program providers may share this resource with your communities to access free SUN Meals. Click [here](#) to search sites in your area.



## Nutrition Ed Nook

### *Lettuce Eat!*

Lettuce is the December's Harvest of the Month ([English](#) and [Spanish](#)) spotlight.

Lettuce is a leafy green vegetable that can grow as loose leaves or in a tightly packed head. There are many varieties of lettuce including romaine, butterhead, crisphead, and looseleaf. They provide vitamins K, C & A, potassium, calcium, folate, and iron. Typically, the darker

varieties of lettuce provide more nutrients.

Lettuce is a cool-season vegetable, grown in spring or fall. Lettuce is in season in Georgia from around October through May but needs protection from extreme heat and cold. Lettuce is an easy item to plant in child care program gardens that can be harvested all season long.

For a flavorful salad, toss lettuce with oil, vinegar and fresh or dry herbs. Adding nuts and other vegetables adds flavor and texture. Besides salads, lettuce can also be added to sandwiches and tacos.

**Fun Fact:** The spine and ribs of lettuce provide dietary fiber, while vitamins and minerals are concentrated in the delicate leaf portion.

### Integration:

- [Tofu Taco](#)
- [Mini-Burgers](#)
- [Turkey Tostadas](#)
- [Hummus and Veggie Wraps](#)
- [Fruity Fun Chicken Salad Cups](#)
- [Ground Chicken Lettuce Wraps](#)

### Education:

- **Watch** a short video on the [Harvest with Holly](#), which explores the Harvest of the Month spotlight, how these items grow, where they grow in Georgia, and how they get from the farms to school meals all across the state of Georgia.
- **Do a lettuce exploration** with different varieties of lettuce (i.e., romaine, green leaf, red leaf, spring mix). Create an observation chart for participants to complete together. Have the participants describe how the lettuce varieties feel, look, taste and smell. Make sure your observation chart is in a centralized area where all participants can see it and participate in the discussion.
- **Read**, "[How Groundhog's Garden Grew](#)", by Lynne Cherry with your program participants. Little Groundhog learns how to plant and tend to his own food garden through every season in this beautifully-illustrated, thoroughly researched picture book by naturalist Lynne Cherry.
- **Talk** with families about how participants can help with meal preparation such as tearing lettuce for salads and sandwiches.
- **Bonus:** Send recipes home with families for them to incorporate lettuce into their meals! Check [Pinterest](#) for recipe inspiration.
- **Want ECE lettuce-themed resources?** Check out Quality Care for Children's [Harvest of the Month toolkit](#) for more ways to engage ECE students.

### Conversation:

- Have your program participants eaten lettuce before?
- What is their favorite meal that includes lettuce?
- What other green vegetables do they like to eat?



### Citrus is December's Harvest of the Month Bonus Spotlight

Citrus refers to juicy fruits that grow on trees and have a bitter outer skin that must be peeled before eating the juicy inner fruit.

Most citrus fruits are very high in vitamin C, which helps heal cuts and gives you healthy skin.

In Georgia, citrus plants are in season from November through December. There are 70 plus citrus farming operations in Georgia and an estimated 300 acres committed to citrus year-round, mostly in the southern portion of the state where the most citrus is produced.

**Fun Fact:** After citrus flowering shrubs or trees are planted, it takes around four years before a tree will start producing significant amounts of citrus.

### Integration:

- [Fresh Salsa](#)
- [Wild Water](#)
- [Fruit Smoothie \(with yogurt\)](#)
- [Fruit Salad With Citrus Sauce](#)
- [Herry's Blueberry Lemon Parfait](#)

Share your Harvest of the Month stories and menu integration of lettuce and citrus with Nutrition Education Specialist, Morgan Chapman, MPH, MCHc at [morgan.chapman@decal.ga.gov](mailto:morgan.chapman@decal.ga.gov).

# Physical Activity Corner

## Energize Your Health

New Month, New You - Energize Your Health!!!

It is that time of the year when loved ones, co-workers, and friends gather during the holiday seasons and New Year.

Make it exciting, entertaining and stress free for you and your loved ones. Here are some simple active ways to stay active and stress-free. Reduce screen time, add exercise, and move it. You and your loved ones can create calendars of fun and easy fitness activities for the month of December.



This can include indoor and outdoor activities, such as yoga, walking/jogging, gardening, dancing (Zumba), doing sit-ups, walking/jogging, jumping rope, biking, playing basketball and soccer.

Post and write small, specific, measurable exercise goals in a visible area, such as on the refrigerator, holiday calendar, and white board. Encourage each other to set active habits. Furthermore, do some stretches hours before bedtime to help with relaxation and sleep. Make physical activity a part of the joyous and fun holiday season.

### Integration:

- **Twelve (12) Days of Fitness on the holidays**
- **Move Your Way: Tips for Getting Motivated**
- **Outdoor Holiday Activities for Children**
- **Healthier Holidays in 1-2-3**
- **What Exercise is Right for Me?**

### Education:

- **Read** aloud the book, "**Grow Strong! A Book About Healthy Habits,**" by Cheri J. Meiners.
- **Watch** the video on "**The Importance of Being Physically Active**"
- **Talk** with families about ways to integrate fitness into the holiday winter season.
- **Bonus:** Send #HolidayWorkout, #HolidayFitnessGoal pictures and events that are happening in your communities.

### Conversation:

- What is your favorite fitness activity to do during the holiday winter season?
- How can I stay physically active during the holidays?
- Why is it important to exercise during the holidays?
- What is stress free and easy exercise to do in the holidays?

Share your #HolidayFitnessChallenge, #HolidayFitnessGoals, #HolidayWorkout stories and pictures with Physical Activity Specialist, Tina McLaren, MPH at [tina.mclaren@decal.ga.gov](mailto:tina.mclaren@decal.ga.gov)

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## Eat Healthy and Live Active

### Georgia Early Care and Education Harvest of the Month 2024-2025 Calendar

The Georgia Early Care and Education Harvest of the Month is a collaborative campaign between Quality Care for Children, Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning, Georgia Department of Human Services, and Georgia Organics. The





campaign aims to encourage healthy eating habits by promoting a different local, seasonal fruit or vegetable each month.

Visit Quality Care for Children's Farm to ECE [webpage](#) to access a variety of classroom resources, including activity ideas linked to the Georgia Early Learning and Development Standards (GELDS), recipe ideas, a book list, and family newsletter to help you promote a new vegetable or fruit each month.

For school-age children resources, visit the Georgia Department of Education's Harvest of the Month [webpage](#).

## Dates to Remember

DATE	EVENTS
<b>December</b>	<b>Harvest of the Month: Lettuce and Citrus</b>
<b>December 5</b>	<b>NCA Webinar – Summer Meals Summit</b>
<b>December 10</b>	<b>Tuesday Tip! It's Snack Time!</b>
<b>December 16</b>	<b>Memo Monday</b>
<b>December 20</b>	<b>Deadline to Apply for Community Impact Grants</b>
<b>December 25</b>	<b>Holiday: Christmas Day</b>
<b>February 5 &amp; 26</b>	<b>HH SFSP Experienced Sponsor Training (1 Day)</b>

## Decal Download

### Georgia Literacy Coach

On the next ...

**DECAL Download**

New Episodes Every Wednesday!

**Sarah Richards**  
Governor's Office of Student Achievement

**Georgia Literacy Coach**  
**Sarah Richards**

Georgia Dept of Early Care and Learning  
BRIGHT FROM THE START

In 2023 the Georgia General Assembly passed legislation focused on improving literacy among students' kindergarten to third grade.

They called for the appointment of a Statewide Literacy Coach to serve the Georgia Council on Literacy.

The person they chose is a longtime educator who has served as a teacher,

administrator, and Literacy Master Teacher with Atlanta Public Schools. On this episode of DECAL Download we talk with Georgia's Literacy Coach Sarah Richards.

Listen to the episode [here](#).

## Happy Helpings Resources:

*The following documents were covered in previous newsletters:*



- [Transitioning from Happy Helpings to CACFP At Risk Afterschool Meals](#)
- [Commercial Recall: BrucePac Meat and Poultry](#)
- [After School Programs Required to Apply for License or Exemption to Participate in At-Risk](#)
- [And Justice for All Posters](#)
- [Notify DECAL When Updating Your Bank Information](#)
- [Procurement Methods At-A-Glance](#)
- [Have You Determined this Summer's Food Cost & Procurement Methods?](#)
- [Budget Representatives Updated April 2024](#)
- [Identifying the Difference between Pre-Award Cost Request vs. Excess Funds](#)
- [Make you Local Farmers Market a Meal Site Option](#)
- [FY24 Reimbursement Rates Released](#)
- [Check you Email Messages in GA ATLAS](#)

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## How was my Customer Service?

*Provide feedback on your experience with the Nutrition Team*



Click on the icon on the right to participate in the customer service survey. Responses are anonymous.

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**Nutrition Division**  
**Marketing & Outreach**

**Cindy Kicklighter**  
**Joann Kilpatrick**

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