



October 3, 2025



Are You Ready to Crunch Into the Fun?

Celebrate All Month Long with the Apple of Our Eye Campaign

October has arrived and so has the celebration. Georgia is celebrating October as Farm to School and Farm to Early Care and Education Month with the Apple of Our Eye Campaign—a time to inspire kids to eat, grow, and learn about locally grown fruits and vegetables. This year, we're shining a spotlight on one of fall's favorite fruits: apples.

The **Apple of Our Eye** Toolkit is live and FREE to access. It's packed with apple-themed lesson plans, activities, cafeteria recipes, and more. Whether you're in the classroom, cafeteria, or garden, this toolkit has everything you need to make October a bushel of fun. Celebrate all month long.

Share your apple-themed activities and photos with us on social media using #appleofoureye. Let's show how we're growing healthy habits—one apple at a time.

Thank You for Another Successful Summer Season

2.9 Million Meals Served during FY25

Thanks to you, more than 2.9 million meals were served to Georgia's children this summer. On behalf of GA DECAL, we thank you for your commitment to serving these meals!

By the Numbers for FY25:

- 65 Sponsors were approved
- 933 Meal Sites were approved
- 109 Georgia Counties had Happy Helping Meal Sites
- Meals Served: 2,930,545

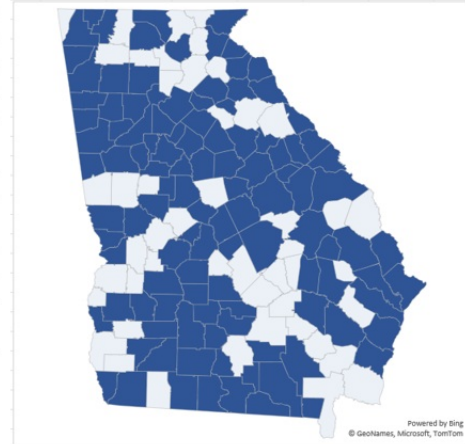
Target Counties for Summer 2026

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 109 counties in 2025! Thank you!

If your organization has the capacity to expand your meal service in 2026, please consider serving meals and snacks in any of the following target counties:

FY26 Areas of Need: 50 Counties

1. Bacon	11. Dawson	21. Johnson	31. Pickens	41. Towns
2. Banks	12. Dodge	22. Jones	32. Pierce	42. Treutlen
3. Berrien	13. Early	23. Long	33. Pike	43. Troup
4. Brantley	14. Evans	24. Marion	34. Pulaski	44. Union
5. Calhoun	15. Forsyth	25. Meriwether	35. Quitman	45. Webster
6. Camden	16. Gordon	26. Miller	36. Schley	46. Wheeler
7. Charlton	17. Grady	27. Montgomery	37. Screven	47. White
8. Coffee	18. Hall	28. Murray	38. Stewart	48. Wilkes
9. Crawford	19. Jeff Davis	29. Oconee	39. Taylor	49. Wilkinson
10. Dade	20. Jenkins	30. Oglethorpe	40. Telfair	50. Worth



Blue: Counties where HH Meals were available in FY25:
White: Counties where meals were not available in FY25

Transitioning from Happy Helpings to CACFP At-Risk Afterschool Meals

Many existing Happy Helpings sites are well-positioned to offer afterschool meals during the school year through the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP). Both organizations and communities benefit when meals are offered to children in low-income communities year-round.

The opportunity for sponsors to transition to At-Risk Afterschool Meals, a component of CACFP, is upon us. Here are a few things to consider:

- An application for Happy Helpings sponsors transitioning to CACFP is required upon initial entry to the CACFP. General updates and annual renewal will be required thereafter.
- As part of the current ATLAS CACFP application process, Happy Helpings sponsors are required to sign a CACFP agreement in addition to their existing agreement.
- Sponsors are required to adhere to all monitoring requirements.
- Sponsors are required to attend training.

If you have questions or are interested in registering for training, please contact [Leslie Truman](#) at 404.657.1779

Annual Year-End Reconciliation Due October 31

Institutions operating FY2025 Happy Helpings Summer Food Program (May 2025- Aug 2025) must complete an Annual Reconciliation Form. **The form and financial document are due October 31.**

If you haven't already done so, please submit the requested documents to avoid any delays in FY2026 Happy Helpings approval.

The reconciliation form and supporting financial documentation should be submitted together to nutritionbudget@decal.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](#).

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 [Happy Helpings Reconciliation Training](#) webinar. It discussed detailed information on the annual Year-End Reconciliation process, how to complete the Reconciliation Form, and documents required for submission and potential next steps.



Nutrition Ed Nook

Crisp and Delicious Apples

Crisp and Delicious Apples are October's Harvest of the Month ([English](#) and [Spanish](#)) feature, and it also ties in perfectly with this year's October Farm to School & Early Care and Education (ECE) Month theme, [Apple of Our Eye](#).

Apples are a naturally sweet, low-calorie snack. They are a good source of fiber, which helps support healthy digestion, manage blood sugar levels, and lower cholesterol. Apples also provide vitamin C, which supports healthy gums, skin, and blood vessels. For the most nutrition, encourage children to eat apples with the peel on.

Apples are a versatile fruit that can be enjoyed in many ways. Try offering apple slices with yogurt or nut/seed butter for dipping, or add chopped apples to salads, oatmeal, or baked goods for a naturally sweet crunch.

In Georgia, apples are in season from August through October. The state's apple industry is centered in North Georgia, with over 85% of apples grown in Gilmer and Fannin counties. Popular Georgia-grown varieties include Red Delicious, Golden Delicious, Fuji, Granny Smith, and many more.

Fun Fact: In China, apples are a symbol of peace because the word Apple History & Culture #appleofoureye for apple (píngguo, 苹果) sounds like the word for peace (píng, 平). Since red represents prosperity and good fortune, apples are often decorated and gifted for Christmas and Chinese New Year.

Integration:

- [Apple Cinnamon Bars](#)
- [Apple and Veggie Omelet](#)
- [Apple & Banana with Dip](#)
- [Fall Apple Pumpkin Oatmeal](#)
- [Apple-Solutely Delicious Chips](#)
- [Baked Sweet Potatoes and Apples](#)

Education:

- **Watch [Fruit for Kids with Blippi | Apple Fruit Factory Tour](#)** video to learn how apples get to the grocery store. You'll visit the orchard and tour inside the apple factory, Blippi will help your participants learn about fruit.
- **Taste Test** two different apple varieties—such as Granny Smith, Gala, or Fuji—using the five senses: look, feel, taste, sound, and smell. Then, create a chart for participants to vote for their favorite.
- **Read [Apples A to Z](#)**, by Margaret McNamara. Fox, Bear, and their friends lead young readers through an apple alphabet—from apple buds and blossoms through nutrition and orchards to the X on an apple pie. Along the way, apple lovers will pick up a windfall of apple science and lore, as well as fun facts and child-friendly information.

- And twenty-six apple varieties are introduced, even ones for X, Y, and Z!
- **Talk** with families about how participants can help with meal preparation such as choosing which apples to buy at the store or rinsing apples under cool running water.
- **Bonus:** Send recipes home with families for them to incorporate apples into their meals! Check [Pinterest](#) for recipe inspiration.
- **Want ECE apple-themed resources?** Check out Quality Care for Children's [Harvest of the Month toolkit](#) for more ways to engage ECE students.

Conversation:

- Have program participants ever been apple picking?
- Which apple variety is their favorite?
- What is their favorite way to eat apples?

Share your Harvest of the Month stories and menu integration of apples with Nutrition Education Specialist, Morgan Chapman, MPH, MCHc at morgan.chapman@decal.ga.gov

Physical Activity Corner

“Walk”tober Month: Let’s Get Walking

A new month, a new you, and a new start of the beautiful fall season. October is National Walk to School Month. Walking is one of the many physical activities people enjoy adding into their daily routine as the weather cools down.

Start the day by moving - go for a walk with you and your family to keep your heart rate up for at least 30-minutes every day. Walking helps to raise awareness on the importance of physical activity and supports good health for our families, schools, and neighboring communities.

As per the Centers for Disease Control’s *Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans*, physical activity improves sleep, reduces anxiety and depression, lowers risk of hypertension and type 2 diabetes, and other chronic diseases.



How To Observe #OctoberWalks

- **At home:** Break away from sitting less and *MOVE* more. Take a 15-minute walk early in the morning or during a lunch break. End a long day of work with a few stretches or a yoga session for quietness, tranquility, and peace of mind.
- **To school (children/parents):** As a family, go together with your children early in the morning to walk to and from school or after-school in the afternoon.
- **With the family:** Walk in with your neighborhood or community – to the park, local mall, local farmer’s market, or a grocery store in the day or on a weekend. Be safe!
- **At work (colleagues):** Invite a colleague to take a 10-minute walk during your break from the computer/office. Take the stairs, instead of the elevators.

The “Power of Walking” is an International Walk to School Month celebrated in the month of October. Organize, plan, or coordinate a small walk community event or an activity with your family, school, work, or local communities.

To find out more, please, visit: www.walkbiketoschool.org or www.livesmartoni.com/walktober.

Integration

- [Walk to School](#)
- [Georgia Safe Routes to School](#)
- [State Parks and Trails in Georgia](#)
- [2025 Georgia 2-Day Walk for Breast Cancer](#)

- **15-minute Walking Workout**

Education:

- **Read** aloud, *We Walk Through the Forest* by Lisa Ferland and Yana Popova.
- **Watch** the video on the **Benefits of Walking**.
- **Talk** with families about ways to incorporate walking into their daily lives.
- **Bonus:** Send #WALKTOBER pictures and events that are happening in your home, early childcare centers, offices, schools, and communities.

Conversation:

- What is the best day and time to walk?
- Who do you enjoy walking with?
- What are the benefits of walking?
- How much should I walk a day?
- What is your favorite leisure place to walk (i.e., parks, trails, neighborhoods, schools)?

Share your #Walktober, #WalkDay, #Walkathon, #Walkclub, #WalkToSchool, #WalkToWork stories and photos with Physical Activity Specialist, Tina McLaren, MPH at tina.mclaren@dec.al.ga.gov



Eat Healthy and Live Active

Georgia Early Care and Education Harvest of the Month 2025-2026 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 different local, seasonal fruits or vegetables each month.

Visit EatLearnGrowGA to access a variety of classroom activities aligned with the Georgia Early Learning and Development Standards (GELDS), recipes, book lists, family newsletters, and more to help you incorporate a new vegetable or fruit each month in the classroom, kitchen, and home.

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

Dates to Remember

DATE	EVENTS
October	Harvest of the Month: Apples
October	Farm to School and Early Care and Education Month
October 13	Holiday: Columbus Day
October 31	Deadline to submit Happy Helpings Annual Year-End Reconciliation

On the next ...
DECAL
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New Episodes Every Wednesday!



Laura Wagner
Executive Director of the
Georgia Foundation for Early
Care + Learning

Jaclyn Colona
Director of Grant Strategies
at the Georgia Foundation
for Public Education



This Week's Topic:
**Early Literacy
Alignment Mini-Grants**



Mini-Grants

This week we're talking with the Georgia Foundation of Early Care and Learning about a new round of Early Literacy Alignment Mini-Grants. With up to \$5,000 in funding, these grants bring public elementary schools and local child care programs together to foster innovative, vertically aligned literacy

practices.

Joining us to talk about the Early Literacy Alignment Mini-Grants is Laura Wagner, Executive Director of the Georgia Foundation for Early Care and Learning, and Paige Buzbee, Executive Director of the Georgia Foundation for Public Education.

Listen to the episode [here](#).

Happy Helpings Resources:

The following documents were covered in previous newsletters:

- [Added New Sites After Application Approval](#)
- [Happy Helpings Summit Training Videos](#)
- [Resources to Promote Meal Sites](#)
- [Excessive Heat and Air Quality Advisories](#)
- [New Supplier Change Request](#)
- [Advance Payment Requests Update](#)
- [Updates to SFSP Procurement Templates](#)
- [Procurement Methods At-A-Glance](#)
- [Have You Determined this Summer's Food Cost & Procurement Methods?](#)
- [2025 SFSP Reimbursement Rates](#)
- [Check you Email Messages in GA ATLAS](#)
- [And Justice for All Posters](#)

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.



Nutrition Division

Marketing & Outreach

Cindy Kicklighter
Joann Kilpatrick

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