

PRESS RELEASE

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State and Federal Officials Visit Mercer County WIC Program



Children enjoy free, nutritious lunches at The Children's Home Society of New Jersey's Mercer WIC Program as part of the USDA Food and Nutrition Service Summer Food Service Program.

Trenton, NJ (September 15, 2015) – The Children's Home Society of New Jersey's (CHSoF NJ) Mercer Women, Infants and Children (WIC) Program has received public praise for its innovative partnership with the city of Trenton for its successful implementation of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) Summer Food Service Program locally. The Mercer WIC Program has been called a wonderful example of an unconventional site for the Summer Food Service Program, which typically serves lunches to low-income children through summer camps or parks.

The Mercer WIC Program's participation has helped the USDA meet its inspiring summer goal; to serve over 200 million free, nutritious meals to children of low-income families at approved sites across the country when school is not in session and balanced school lunches are unavailable. Jeanne Hutchins of the FNS Mid-Atlantic Region commented on the importance of the program, saying, "CHSoF NJ's Mercer WIC Program is meeting a real need. So many studies have documented the summer decline in school readiness; feeding children supports their learning in the summer and throughout the year." The Mercer

WIC Program, sponsored by The Children's Home Society of New Jersey, provided free, nutritious lunches to Mercer WIC participants and Mercer County residents age 2 through 18 Monday through Thursday from June 29 through August 29.

On August 18, Mayor Eric Jackson and USDA Officials toured the Mercer WIC Program office at 416 Bellevue Avenue in Trenton as children and families met with CHSofNJ's skilled and caring staff. In addition to providing children free, nutritious lunches including milk, protein, and a fruit or vegetable through the Summer Food Service Program, CHSofNJ staff from the Mercer WIC Program continued to share important health and nutrition information and assist families receiving vital WIC nutrition services.

"Our Mercer WIC staff and The Children's Home Society of New Jersey as a whole recognize the importance of the Summer Food Service Program, because we help families dealing with food instability every day," said Joan Martin, Program Administrator for the Mercer WIC Program. She continued, "For so many low-income families, school lunches are one of the only nutritious meals their children are able to enjoy, so we are delighted to have helped the USDA Food and Nutrition Service implement this important program here in our community."

Maritza Raimundi-Petroski, CHSofNJ's Director of Maternal-Child Health, Family, and Community Support Services said of the partnership between CHSofNJ's Mercer WIC Program and the USDA FNS Summer Food Service Program, "It is about the human element and serving all families in the city. We are proud to be the first WIC program in the entire state to establish this creative partnership to ensure that families in our capital city receive valuable meals to help children grow healthy and ready to learn."

About The Children's Home Society of New Jersey

The Children's Home Society of New Jersey is a nonprofit child and family serving agency whose mission is to save children's lives and build healthy families. Founded in 1894, the agency protects abused or neglected infants and at-risk children by ensuring stable, permanent, and loving homes for each and every child it serves. All services are confidential and most are free. For more information, visit our website at www.chsofnj.org.

About The Children's Home Society of New Jersey's Mercer Women, Infants & Children (WIC) Program

The Mercer WIC Program provides supplemental nutritious foods to pregnant, breastfeeding and postpartum women, infants and children up to age five who live in Mercer County, NJ and meet the WIC program's income guidelines. WIC services include issuance of checks for free healthy food, nutrition education and counseling, breastfeeding promotion and support, immunization screening, and referrals to health care and other social support services. Enrollment is open to all eligible applicants, and U.S. citizenship is not required to receive program benefits. If you already receive food stamps or Medicaid, you may automatically qualify for WIC. Call 609-498-7755 to schedule an appointment, or visit www.wicmercerc.org to learn more.

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