

# Summer food program feeds thousands every year



Photo by Carrie Pederson  
The summer food program will last until Aug. 18.

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Of the News

**VENETA** — Mmmmm. Lunch is served.

Throughout the summer, thousands of children 18 and younger will be gobbling up chicken patties, burgers, burritos, fruits and vegetables and milk, thanks to the Summer Food Program sponsored by Food for Lane County.

Free lunches are being served at Veneta Park, from noon to 1 p.m., Monday through Friday, from now until Aug. 18. Toddlers must be accompanied by an adult.

"We love the Veneta Park site because we always get lots of parent support," said Karen Roth, manager of the Summer Food Program.

The Veneta site is one of 59 sites throughout Lane County, but Veneta is one of the few sites that serves hot meals, Roth said.

During the summer, it's often more difficult for food programs to reach hungry children, so they try to target places where children hang out in the summer, such as Veneta Park, which is close to the city swimming pool on E. Broadway Avenue.

Food for Lane County runs the largest summer food program in the state. Last year, 2,548 free meals were served to children. The summer program is funded with grants, donations, county funds and subsidies from the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

At 41 percent, Lane County leads the state of Oregon in children eligible for free or reduced school lunches. Of that number, Roth said, the Summer Food Program serves 25 to 30 percent. Nationwide, similar summer food programs reach 12 to 16 percent of children in need. The average is 18 percent

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