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Montgomery County Expands Free Nutritional Summer Lunch Program

**On Monday, June 28, at Rolling Terrace Elementary, County Leaders Will Discuss How
Federal Funding Has Helped Expand Program for Students**



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ROCKVILLE, Md., June 24, 2010—Montgomery County Council Vice President Valerie Ervin, Superintendent of Schools Jerry D. Weast and members of the County Board of Education will join students for lunch at Rolling Terrace Elementary School in Takoma Park at 12 noon on Monday, June 28, to discuss the expansion of free walk-in sites for the summer lunch program.

The program will have a total of eight free walk-in sites this summer, an increase from seven sites last year. The first walk-in center opened in 2007. The summer lunch program is aimed at increasing the number of eligible children who have healthy food options during the summer.

“We have to remember that many children depend on the meals they receive at school as their primary source of nutrition,” said Council Vice President Ervin, who chairs the County Council’s Education Committee and represents District 5, which includes Kensington, Silver Spring, Takoma Park and Wheaton. “Schools may be closed, but the need to feed children especially those who qualify for free and reduced meals does not end. That is why I keep pushing to expand the summer lunch program.”

Rolling Terrace Elementary, located at 705 Bayfield Street in the Downcounty Consortium, was chosen as a host for the summer free lunch program in 2009 based on research compiled by an inter-agency working group. The working group identified children’s lack of access to food as a significant barrier to academic achievement and nutrition during the summer.

About 30 percent of Montgomery County Public Schools students qualify for Free and Reduced Meals (FARMS), a poverty indicator and a figure that may be higher due to underreporting.

Montgomery County Public Schools has been a sponsor of the Summer Food Service Program since 1976. The program is operated with federal funding.

“The summer is an important time of continued learning and growth for our students and we are committed to doing our part to make sure they receive nutritious meals during the day,” said Superintendent Weast. “I am very pleased that we are able to expand this program over the summer.”

The Montgomery County Public Schools Division of Food and Nutrition Services delivers food to students enrolled in more than 120 summer programs throughout the County. Rolling Terrace is one of eight free walk-in sites, which means that students not registered for a summer camp or recreation program can still stop in and eat a nutritious lunch. All free walk-in sites are located in areas where at least 50 percent of students are eligible for FARMS.

“Many studies have shown the link between student achievement and good nutrition,” said Councilmember Ervin. “Local officials must do all we can to ensure that we are taking advantage of these federal funds to feed our neediest children.”

In addition to Rolling Terrace, the returning free walk-in lunch sites include Maryvale Elementary (Rockville), Summit Hall Elementary (Gaithersburg) and Kennedy High School (Wheaton/Glenmont). Four sites are new, although several replace other nearby sites. The new sites are Argyle Middle (Silver Spring/Aspen Hill), Glen Haven Elementary (Silver Spring), Harmony Hills Elementary (Silver Spring/Aspen Hill) and Stedwick Elementary (Montgomery Village). The walk-in sites are strategically placed in dense dwelling areas that are easily accessible to many families.

The walk-in programs will operate through Aug. 20. The programs are available 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. each weekday.

The addition of walk-in sites has helped increase the number of participants in the Summer Food Service Program by 34.3 percent from 2006 to 2009.

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