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**WATERVLIET CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT CELEBRATES NEW SUMMER FOOD SERVICE PROGRAM  
WITH KICK-OFF EVENT IN GREEN ISLAND**

Today, children in Green Island celebrated the beginning of the Watervliet City School District's Summer Food Service Program with a kick-off event.

Representatives from the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), Office of Senator Kirsten Gillibrand, New York State Education Department (NYSED), Nutrition Consortium of NYS, Watervliet City School District, and other local organizations joined in on the fun.

Children enjoyed a free lunch, listened to music, learned about healthy eating, toured the local fire department truck, and participated in activities such as arts and crafts and seed planting. Local community agencies such as Whitney Young Health Center and Capital District Community Gardens provided additional health and well-being information to parents.

Through the Summer Food Service Program, children age 18 & younger can eat free, nutritious meals during the summer months, when free and reduced-price school meals are not available. The program is mostly federally-funded through USDA and administered at the state level by NYSED.

Frances O'Donnell, Coordinator of the Child Nutrition Program Administration of NYSED said, "We are pleased the Watervliet City School District is a sponsor of the Summer Food Service Program. By providing free summer meals to children age 18 and younger in the community, the school district enables more children to obtain nutritious meals this summer and return to school ready to learn."

The Summer Food Service Program is "sponsored" at the local level by schools, government entities, and non-profit organizations. For the past several years the Watervliet City School District has been a program sponsor, preparing and serving free summer meals at multiple locations throughout Watervliet and now Green Island.

"School may end when summer arrives, but our commitment to children does not, and that is why we host these meal sites," Darryl Whited, Food Service Director for the Watervliet City School District said. "We are pleased offer free meals made possible by essential community partnerships."

The Nutrition Consortium of NYS collaborated with the Watervliet City School District, Village of Green Island, and Church of the Good Shepherd to coordinate this kick-off event to raise awareness about the SFSP in the area. Over 50% of Green Island's students are eligible to receive free or reduced-price school meals.

Linda Bopp, Executive Director of the Nutrition Consortium of NYS said, "We commend the Watervliet City School District for operating the Summer Food Service Program. Throughout NYS, less than one-third of all children eating free or reduced-price school lunch also eat summer lunch through the Summer Food Service Program. With summer meals now offered in Green Island, we hope to see more children participating in the Summer Food Service Program this summer."

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