



# Volunteers

Schenectady Inner City Ministry: Schenectady, NY

For 15 years SICM has recruited hundreds of volunteers each summer to provide free lunches throughout the summer. Our volunteer groups find this so rewarding that they essentially recruit themselves and every year we have to turn teams away. Each March we create a flyer to announce the need through SICM's member organizations (57 faith communities) and to other organizations we have partnered with in the past. People respond and SICM secures the sites and coordinates the schedule. Each summer at least 65 teams help feed the kids at 13 different sites. Some groups volunteer for the whole summer while others donate from 1 - 8 weeks.

Early in June we train volunteer coordinators from each team, and they in turn recruit and train volunteers from their organizations. At this initial training we describe what they will do and

any relevant laws and guidelines they need to be aware of - and we share lots of stories about how rewarding it is to serve the children.

At the end of our program, we invite all of our volunteers to an ice cream social where each volunteer group is given a certificate with a photo of their team in the location where they volunteered. This is where we actually begin to recruit for next year just by relationships that have been formed.

Our volunteers are essential to our program. Working under the direction of a site supervisor, our volunteers bag the lunches that the vendor delivers, hands them out and tracks the number of meals served. Our volunteers also engage in fun activities with the children (reading stories, creating arts & craft projects,

playing games, making paper airplanes and simply listening and talking.

SICM only has one staff person dedicated to our Summer Lunch program - and nearly 700 volunteers. Because of our volunteers, we are able to operate 13 sites and feed 900 - 1000 kids a day. Initially, most of these volunteers have no real understanding of hunger in our community, until they find themselves face to face with hungry children day after day. Repeated hundreds of times each day in the summer, our volunteers take this personal message back to their churches, businesses and community organizations, helping to educate the larger community about hunger issues. Many volunteers become passionate about these issues and return each year or even volunteer with our Emergency Food Pantry, which is open year round.



Food that's in when school is out.



Photo 1: Central Park Summer during lunch

Photo 2:  
Schenectady  
Inner City  
Ministry  
volunteers

