



PRESS RELEASE

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**Rhode Island Community Food Bank Presents
Woonsocket Schools with School Breakfast Excellence Awards**

Citizens Memorial & Kevin K. Coleman Elementary School Recognized for Improving School Breakfast

PROVIDENCE, R.I. – Earlier this week, the Rhode Island Community Food Bank presented the Citizens Memorial School and the Kevin K. Coleman Elementary School, both of Woonsocket, with School Breakfast Excellence Awards. The awards were presented in recognition of the schools’ work to increase participation in their School Breakfast programs. Each award, which is a check for \$1,000, will be used by the school’s principal to benefit the students.

To encourage schools to make the changes necessary to increase the number of students eating breakfast at school, the Rhode Island Community Food Bank, Kids First and the Rhode Island Department of Education developed the School Breakfast Excellence Awards. The awards, which were made possible thanks to sponsorship support from United Natural Foods and other local businesses, will be presented to schools that achieve 50 percent participation in School Breakfast, one-half of the total enrollment, for at least one month.

In order to be eligible, a school must be a Rhode Island public school located in a high-need community in which at least 40 percent of the lunches are served to free and reduced-price eligible children. For young, school-aged children, breakfast is the most important meal of the day. A good meal to start the day gives students the energy they need to succeed in class.

Studies show that children who eat a healthy breakfast learn better, behave better and perform better than children who do not eat breakfast. “Too many children go to school hungry, and the result is that they are not ready to learn,” says Andrew Schiff, Chief Executive Officer of the Rhode Island Community Food Bank. “When you’re hungry, it is more difficult to focus your attention on the curriculum, to absorb what is being taught,” continued Schiff.

At Citizens Memorial, the school increased participation in School Breakfast by working closely with Sodexo School Services and Kids First, an organization that works with schools and communities to improve the nutritional well-being of children, to introduce new and different foods into the breakfast menu. This partnership was made possible by the RI Department of Education being awarded a Team Nutrition Grant to develop and deliver a Communication and Education Technical Assistance System that encourages schools to do more with fruits, vegetables and legumes as part of the new Rhode Island Nutrition Requirements.

“I commend these schools for taking the necessary steps to ensure that more students begin their day with a healthy meal. If we can get schools in low-income communities to increase participation to 50 percent of their students, we will have a great impact on the lives of tens of thousands of children,” finished Schiff.

Currently, the Food Bank feeds more than 50,000 Rhode Islanders each month through a network of more than 300 member agency programs across the state. This represents an increase of 30% over last year. Each day, approximately 20,000 Rhode Island children receive free or reduced-price School Breakfast, with the state ranking 37th in the country in School Breakfast participation.

The Rhode Island Community Food Bank is a non-profit organization located in Providence, RI. The Food Bank solicits, stores and distributes food products donated by supermarkets, wholesalers, food processors, local farmers and community food drives. The food is then distributed to the Food Bank’s network of more than 300 member agency programs. In the past fiscal year, the Food Bank distributed 9.5 million pounds of food. For more information about the Food Bank, please visit www.rifoodbank.org