Creative

Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Chicago: Chicago, IL

This year Catholic Charities' Summer Food Program (SFP) ramped up its creative efforts by blending fresh, innovative ideas into its program activities, service delivery, staffing and funding.

From kickoff to conclusion, SFP proclaimed a clear message to kids: it's fun to get moving and eat sensibly! Catholic Charities not only provided more than 325,000 nutritious meals to low-income kids at nearly 200 sites, but also helped them get on their feet and exercise. By providing meals and introducing physical activities and nutrition education, Catholic Charities helped thousands of kids prepare to learn better in school this year and succeed in life.

Catholic Charities used a tool called "the ABCs of Fitness and Nutrition" for the first time in 2011. Each day was themed with a different letter of the alphabet to inspire kids to choose the right foods, and to try new physical movements in playful ways. For example, the Letter 'G' featured eating grapes, and galloping like a horse.

In conjunction with First Lady Michelle Obama's *Let's Move* Faith & Communities initiative, every SFP experience also incorporated activities like hopscotch, jumping rope and stretching. Kids even jumped at the chance to dance together at SFP, learning the choreography for Beyonce's "Move Your Body," the *Let's Move* anthem.

SFP cast an even wider net in search of SFP sites, recruiting new community partners like churches of every denomination, schools, and park districts. SFP mobile meals trucks reached further into isolated neighborhoods where some of the neediest kids live.

When team members were needed to help SFP grow, those most in need of a job were hired: youth without prior work experience, and unemployed adults. They mastered skills like food service, logistics and customer service, and increased their incomes. And, more than ever before, SFP utilized corporate and foundation partners to boost the program's impact.

Catholic Charities' 2011 Summer Food Program demonstrated that infusing nutrition programs with valuable ideas can change lives and plant the seeds for healthier choices in the future.

Photo 1: Catholic Charities' Summer Food Program succeeded in getting 36,708 apples, like the crunchy red delicious apple shown here, into the hands of hungry kids.

Photo 2: As Beyonce's "Move Your Body" anthem floated through the room, kids danced in unison and together shared the positive vibes of exercise.