



Rural

Running Strong: Eagle Butte, SD

"These kids are starving out here!" This is Heather's first year as a cook for the Running Strong for American Indian Youth® Summer Youth Food Service Program on the Cheyenne River Sioux Indian Reservation, SD. Cherry Creek, the community where Heather cooks, is in Ziebach County which suffers the highest child poverty rate in the country. In addition to poverty, the people living on Cheyenne River are faced with the added obstacle of extreme isolation. With communities located hundreds of miles from one another, often getting to the grocery store to buy food is simply not feasible. A former cook told us, "It costs a lot of gas to get to the grocery store, and a lot of families don't have vehicles, so they must hire someone to take them. It could cost them \$45 just to get there! We don't have that kind of money here."

To make sure we were able to reach as many tummies as possible this summer, Running Strong hosted feeding sites in 5 different communities and served over 3,911 meals.

To keep kids on site while they ate lunch, the cooks gave each child a little prize for finishing their meal and cleaning up their trash. Prizes included things like stickers, pencils, silly-band bracelets, poppers, toy basketball games, and kazoos. The kids were not only eating, but they looked forward to their meal even more to see what prize they would get afterwards! Additionally, Running Strong's cooks distributed coloring pages with fun facts about healthy eating and exercise and the kids proudly displayed their art work on the walls. "They really like to color, and I think some of the fun

facts will stick with them!" another cook told us.

Thanks to the mini-grant from the USDA, Running Strong purchased kick-balls and jump-ropes and distributed them the last week of the program. We played kickball and jump rope to get the children's heart rates going and talked about their favorite fruits and vegetables.

"I do this for the kids," Heather reflected on her first summer and the challenges she faced keeping kids onsite in a rural area.

"Parents argued that kids should bring their lunch home. It was so bad that my mom even told me to just let this job go, but I'm not doing it for myself. I know these kids and I know how much they need this food."



Food that's in when school is out.



Photo 1: Enjoying yogurt and milk from her summer lunch sack



Photo 2: Kick balls are really special to kids in a rural community