

■ For Populations
Greater Than 20,000



Jim Blagg

A community needs study in Abilene, Texas (Jim Blagg, city manager), identified hunger as a significant problem in the community, particularly for children. Almost 1,000 of the city's households were affected. To address the problem, a subcommittee of the mayor's Task Force on Community Needs applied to the Texas Department of Human Services to fund a Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) that would provide meals to qualifying children during the summer.

The Summer Food Service Program is a U.S. Department of Agriculture program administered by state departments of human services. Typically, schools sponsor these programs.

The city's community services department coordinated the program with its Summer Playground Program, since the Abilene Independent School District (AISD) was unable, with its limited resources, to take on the program. The playground program, a structured recreation program for youth, runs approximately two

and a half months each year in six city recreation centers.

The city relied on the cooperation of city departments, the school district, local businesses, and the state department of human services to manage the program successfully. AISD donated the use of one of its school's kitchens. Kitchen operations were supervised by two city staff, and food preparation staff were hired from SFSP proceeds. The parks division transported meals from the kitchen site to the recreation centers where recreation staff supervised and served the meals. Meals delivered to sites that had no storage facilities were held in cold boxes donated by a milk company that delivered milk to the sites.

So that every child received a meal, the city's summer playground program was opened to nonregistered participants during advertised mealtimes.

In 1988, the second year of the program, Abilene provided 13,088 meals to children under 18 at an average cost per meal of \$1.48 and an administrative cost of \$.05 per meal. The program was fully reimbursed in its second year of operation. This summer the city and the school district jointly provided the program.