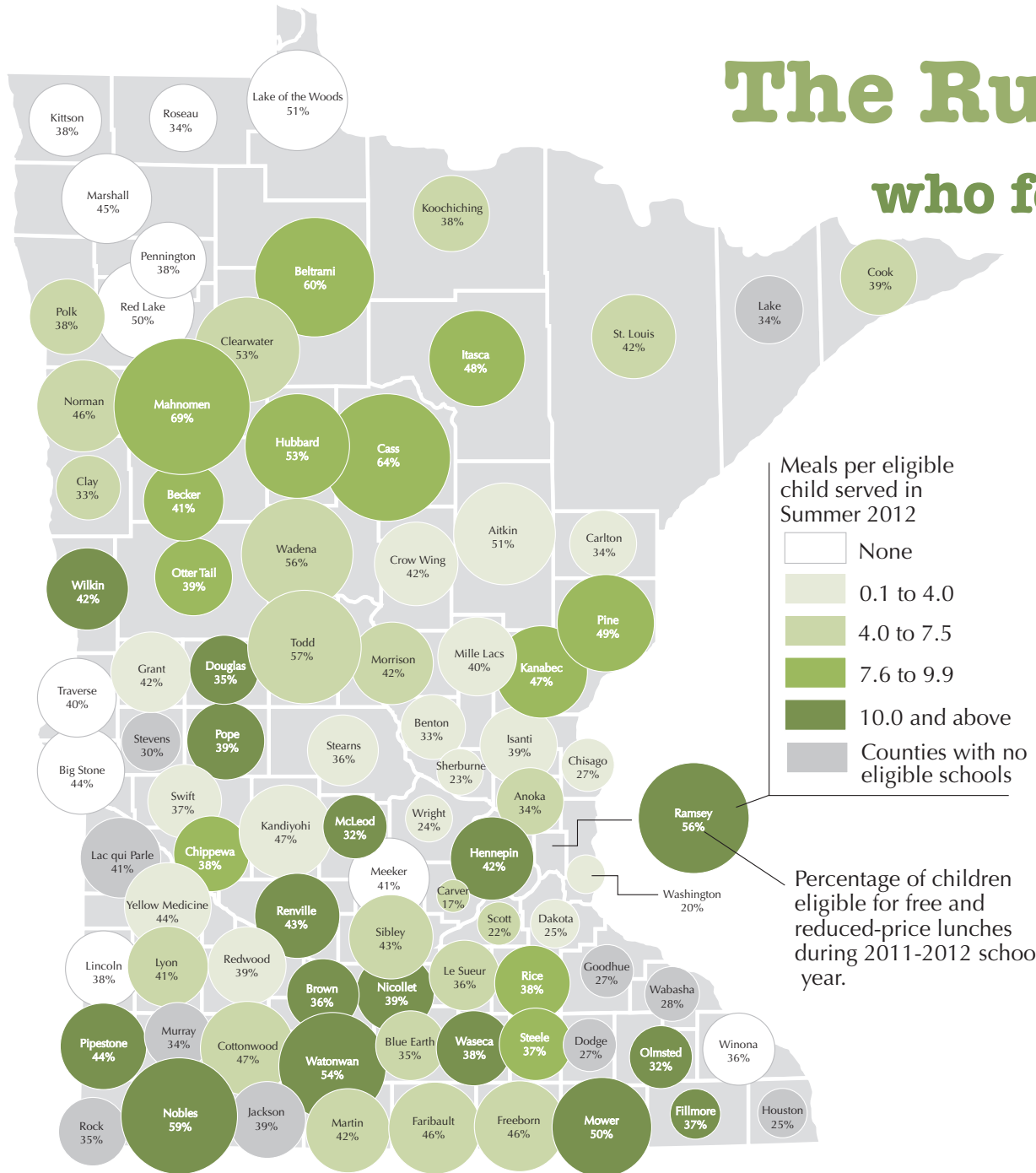


# The Rural Reality

## who feeds our children during the summer?



In summer 2012, nearly 140 sponsoring organizations worked with the Minnesota Department of Education to provide 2.3 million meals to children through the Summer Food Service Program and the Seamless Summer Program at over 600 sites around the state. In 2013, the number of sponsors has grown to more than 150.

More than 307,000 Minnesota children qualified for free and reduced-price lunches during the 2011-2012 school year.

Data source: Minnesota Department of Education, Summer Food Service Program



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According to the Minnesota Department of Education, rural areas face **five challenges** in particular when it comes to offering summer food programs:

**Transportation:** Working parents, households without vehicles, and the expense of buses—not to mention the cost of gas—can make it difficult to get children to and from meal sites. Second Harvest Heartland awards grants to sponsors within its service area to help increase participation. These grants can help with non-food expenses like transportation and activities.

**Sparse population:** The sparse population and greater distances in rural areas make getting kids and volunteers to meal sites more of a challenge.

### **Availability of sponsors:**

Rural areas have fewer organizations to act as sponsors. Sponsors provide the food, the site and the volunteers. In turn, the sponsor is reimbursed for food expenses by the Minnesota Dept of Education.

### **Awareness:**

Getting word out to parents and kids about opportunities for meal sites and activities can be a challenge.

**Stigma:** Some families may be reluctant to have their neighbors find out that their children qualify for free or reduced-price lunches at school. Most sites are open to all children, however, regardless of income, and no proof of eligibility is needed.

### **To find out more:**

Minnesota Department of Education  
(800) 366-8922 or [mde.fns@state.mn.us](mailto:mde.fns@state.mn.us)

Second Harvest Heartland  
[www.2harvest.org](http://www.2harvest.org)  
(888) 339-3663



## **The Rural Reality**

The Center for Rural Policy and Development's effort to illustrate the diversity and priorities of Minnesota's regions.