

# How GEN YOUTH



## is Helping Fight Student Hunger in America's Schools

■ By Ryan Slattery

Studies show that more than half of American students rely on school meals to meet their daily nutritional needs. Absent these essential meals—including dairy products like milk, as well as whole grains, fruits, vegetable, and lean protein -- many of these children would go hungry, negatively impacting their ability to learn as well as their overall development and growth. A hungry child will lack focus and have a much lower attention span.

The numbers are staggering. Nearly 30 million children—over 60 percent of all students—rely on school meals for

a significant amount of their daily nutrition. One in five students is food insecure and for Black, Indigenous and Hispanic students that number is even higher. According to the USDA, the number of children living in food insecure households has increased 45 percent since 2021 alone.

With school budgets teetering and many districts short of funds, national non-profit GENYOUth, founded by America's dairy farmers and the NFL with the mission of ensuring schoolchildren thrive by living well-nourished and physically active lives, is committed to providing meal



delivery solutions to schools to increase access to and participation in school meals.

"School meals are the largest safety net for hungry children, and a recent Tufts University study confirms that they provide the healthiest meals kids consume. However, barriers like time constraints and stigma limit student access to and participation in school breakfast programs. We must ensure that all students have the nutrition they need to thrive both in the classroom and beyond," said Ann Marie Krautheim, CEO of GENYOUth.

"Schools are now the single healthiest place Americans are eating," said Dariush Mozaffarian, dean of the Friedman School and senior author of the study. "Our results suggest substantial nutritional harms for millions of kids who have not been consistently receiving meals at school and must rely on other sources. These harms also disproportionately affect low-income, Black and Latinx children."

GENYOUth works with school districts across the nation to provide equipment to support innovative and alternative approaches to school meals, including Grab and Go, which has been proven to increase average daily school meal participation by as much as 58%. Other proven methods include Breakfast in the Classroom and Second Chance breakfast.



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**Krautheim**

With the support of philanthropic-minded partners, GENYOUth raises critical funds to help end student hunger. One of its most ambitious initiatives is its annual Taste of the NFL event, a collaboration with chefs and athletes, held each year in the Super Bowl's host city. The popular culinary and charity event raised \$1.8 million in Phoenix in 2023 and \$2 million last year in Las Vegas in 2024. The funds raised from the event since its founding in 1992 have helped benefit more than 1,000 schools and 550,000 students providing access to 148 million school meals for students in all 32 NFL club markets.

And planning is now underway for Taste of the NFL on February 8, 2025, in New Orleans. To kick off GENYOUth's commitment to the NOLA community, it is launching Super School Meals, a high impact purpose driven initiative that will provide Grab and Go school meal equipment grants to schools throughout Louisiana.

Concludes Krautheim, “With schools urgently seeking resources to promote nutrition equity and food justice, we invite dedicated individuals to join us in our effort to end student hunger. Together, we can ensure that the only hunger a child feels is the hunger to learn.”

**For more information on how you can help, visit [genyouthnow.org](http://genyouthnow.org).**

