

The Community Food Bank of Eastern Oklahoma will dispatch its pair of food trucks during winter break to help feed hungry students and their families. The organization's Mobile Eateries will make stops at six low-income communities around Tulsa throughout the next two weeks to serve free lunches to students who are out of school. Both food trucks are sent out during extended school breaks, including summer, due to the added stress for financially struggling families. It's hard to think about children going hungry. During the holiday season it is particularly heartbreaking," said Eileen Bradshaw, executive director of the food bank. "Families should be enjoying the season around the table with good food. "Our goal is to make sure as many families as possible get the healthy food they need over the winter break and children are ready to start school in January ready to work. Good nutrition will help make sure they are prepared."

The trucks will deliver an estimated 2,800 meals during Tulsa Public Schools' winter break. Classes will resume Jan. 7. Although the meals typically are cooked in the food bank's culinary center, both vehicles are equipped with kitchens where, if needed, more can be produced on the road. "They're really versatile, and they're easy to gear up," said Greg Raskin, the food bank's communication manager. Raskin said the Mobile Eateries have filled an essential need for families since they launched in 2013. Part of that need stems from the high number of low-wage jobs in Oklahoma, he said. Nearly 30 percent of the state's jobs in 2016 existed in occupations with median annual pay below the poverty line for a family of four, according to the Prosperity Now Scorecard. Additionally, the U.S. Department of Agriculture reported 15.2 percent of Oklahoma households experienced food insecurity from 2014 to 2016, while 6.3 percent experienced very low food security. Because many children rely on free and reduced-price school meals, winter break often brings their families difficult choices, such as paying for higher utilities or buying groceries during winter break, Raskin said. "It's a series of choices that people on the margin are continually having to make," he said. "So if we can provide food,

that helps take some of the pressure off.â€• Kyle Hinchey 918-581-8451 kyle.hinchey@tulsaworld.com Twitter: @ky