



Laurelhurst Nutrition News

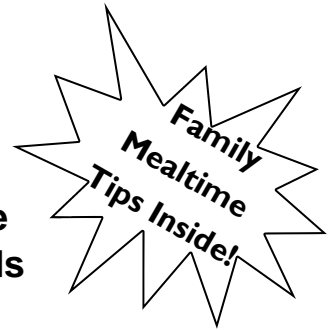
Spring 2006

Head of the Table

Elise Hart, Chairperson,
Laurelhurst Nutrition
Advisory Committee (LNAC)



Connect, Create and Communicate With Your Kids at Mealtimes



Our Spring issue spotlights the LNAC collaboration with the School District to build nutrition services and the significance of the family meal. Perhaps you've seen some of our efforts highlighted in recent local news outlets:

- We had something to say in *Seattle Child's* January '06 issue in Part I of "Eating Right at School – Lunch Programs Go on Low-Fat Diet."
- Our 2nd and 3rd grade birthday policies were recognized in a recent *Seattle Times* article (2/11/06), "Breaking the Sugar Cycle."
- Our newly launched website (see page 4) was given recognition in the same *Seattle Times* article. A huge thank you to both Laurelhurst parent Scott Burbage and our Technology Specialist, Peter Klein, without whom the website wouldn't have happened!

At the District level the LNAC continues to play a role. As an adjunct member of the District Nutrition Advisory Committee that was formed last month, myself and other community members are charged with providing recommendations to the District on such items as school menu, nutrition policy, nutrition education, and cafeteria facilities/environment. It's an enthusiastic group and our first task has been to visit and have lunch at different public schools to get perspective on district-wide nutrition efforts. We're all eager to roll up our sleeves and dig in!

The critical connection between good nutrition and education is in the spotlight! I invite you to read on to explore the value of connecting at mealtimes, learn what topics were "on the table" at school lunchtime and find out what's happening in one Laurelhurst classroom to learn about smart snacking.

As always, we're eager to hear from you. Cheers!

At the PTA-sponsored "Parent Night School" in February, Chef Tom French conducted a session, "Connect, Create and Communicate with Your Kids," which focused on the importance of sharing family mealtimes.

Chef Tom, who for many years helped build and run the food-service training program, FareStart, is now a privately funded chef with a mission to help implement nutrition-based programs in Western Washington. Through his work at FareStart, Chef Tom had the opportunity to interview over 2,500 homeless people. A key learning from that experience was that over 90% had poor mealtime experiences during their childhood. He consistently noted a lack of nurturing and belonging. As a result of this experience, **Chef Tom believes that family mealtimes are a critical element of health and well-being for children.**

According to Chef Tom, the family meal provides an opportunity for family members to bond, plan, connect and talk to each other, which can help build strong relationships by fostering warmth, security and love.

He went on to explain that children learn so much through listening to the conversation of others and through dialogue. There are several studies that show word comprehension, problem solving and social skills are greatly enhanced among families that share meals on a regular basis.

Children who have family meals five or more times a week are more likely to have lower levels of stress and tension. They also are more likely to feel secure about going to one or both parents with a serious problem.

Chef Tom recognizes that most families have schedules that can make it difficult for everyone to sit down together. Yet, he encouraged parents to, **"think of family mealtime as building infrastructure for your family."**

Turn to page 3 for fun mealtime ideas!



Family Mealtime Sounds Great, But Who Has Time?



Fun Family Mealtime Tips!

While sharing family mealtime may sound good in theory, when faced with the hectic pace of daily life, how can you turn this into reality? Chef Tom advises getting your kids involved and motivated. In his experience with his own kids, children often provide the motivation once habits are established.

Try these ideas:

Let the children have creative license in setting the table.

- Have fun napkins on hand.
- Invest in plastic (for the younger set) “fancy” glasses to liven up the milk quota.
- Have the children create their own placemats or invest in ones that have some significant subject matter: a map of the world, ballet poses, or a “how to lay out the silverware” design.

Let the children help with “cold prep.”

- Even without using knives or the stove, kids can get involved with preparing meals by washing vegetables, peeling the carrots, and measuring ingredients.

Get the conversation going.

- Get the family talking about interesting and engaging topics by providing some “conversation topics” to help get things started. You can buy “conversation topics” kits or make your own.

Make the focus *participation* not perfection!

Parent Resource

For Chef Tom’s complete “Top Ten” list of reasons to share family mealtimes, as well as additional resources to help make mealtimes fun, visit LNAC’s website at www.seattleschools.org/schools/laurelhurst/nutrition/index.html and click on “Let Us Inspire You.”



Table Topics Come to Lunch

In recognition of National Nutrition Month, LNAC sponsored two special lunch events in March to help students engage in conversations with each other. Teachers, staff and parents were invited to join the students for lunch. LNAC provided the conversation topics, which included:

At K-2nd Lunch—What is your idea of a good surprise?, Would you rather be able to fly or be invisible?

At 3rd-5th Lunch—If you could invite one famous person to dinner, who would it be and why?, What is more important, knowledge or imagination?

The events were given a resounding “thumbs up” by parents, teachers, and students. The adults commented on how engaged the students were in discussion and on the range of interesting answers they heard.

Of particular note was a conversation between two students who wanted to have Louis Sachar, author of *Holes*, over for dinner. They want to be authors and he could give them ideas on how to get into the business. Another student was actually disappointed when she arrived at lunch the day after the first event and found there were no conversation topics on the tables.

Thank you to Laurelhurst parents, teachers and staff who enthusiastically embraced these lunchtime events and took the time to sit down with students and help facilitate conversations.

CARROTS

Carrots are Mother Nature’s best vegetables? The carrots secret is that it has vitamin A. It helps you protects your skin. Also helps your I sight. PLUS it’s sweet.

Thank you to Josh Meltzer and Shalina Prasad from Mr. Howard’s 4th grade class for contributing their “ad” from their class Nutrition Unit project.



Let Us Inspire You! LNAC Launches Website

The Laurelhurst Nutrition Advisory Committee recently launched its website, which was featured the next week as a nutrition resource in *The Seattle Times*! The website is intended to support LNAC's goal of providing innovative and engaging programming and information to help students, parents, staff, and our community, make the link between good nutrition and readiness to learn.

Check out "Let Us Inspire You" where you will find great ideas for alternative birthday celebrations, creative lunches, or ways to connect with your family during mealtimes. The site also includes past issues of the *Laurelhurst Nutrition News*, information about our school garden, and volunteer opportunities.

The site is intended to be a resource for the Laurelhurst community, but the goal also is to turn it into a resource that supports the broader community. The website includes helpful tips for starting a school nutrition committee and ideas for a kick-off event. Check back often as we are continually adding inspiring information.

We hope you will visit the site at:
www.seattleschools.org/schools/laurelhurst/nutrition/index.html

And share it with others!

Parent Resources

LNAC website:

www.seattleschools.org/schools/laurelhurst/nutrition/index.html

Seattle Child's January 2006 article:

www.seattlechild.com/0106month.htm

Seattle Times February 11, 2006 article:

http://seattletimes.nwsourc.com/html/childrenshealth/2002797382_healthyparty11.html



Would You Like to Get Involved With LNAC?

As a new committee, we are looking for volunteers! We have lots of exciting opportunities covering a range of interests, including:

- Gardeners
- Classroom education supporters
- Creative minds to help with the newsletter, bulletin board, and website
- Organized event coordinators

Send Us Your Ideas!

We would also like any feedback or suggestions. Please send us your creative snack or lunch ideas!

Elise Hart—laurelhurstnutrition@hotmail.com

Mission Statement

The mission of the LNAC is to integrate a comprehensive nutrition and health program that maximizes the students' opportunity to learn and grow. The goals of the LNAC are as follows:

- To raise awareness through health and nutrition education/outreach for children, families, and staff.
- To help the school staff implement policies and guidelines to support the District nutrition initiatives.
- To improve the quality of the food served in the school cafeteria by working with the Seattle School District Office of Child Nutrition.

Thank you to Chef Tom French, Chef Grace Dublin and her students, Pat Howard and his students, School Nurse Ann Chryst, and Wendy Katzman for your newsletter contributions!