

Laurelhurst Nutrition News

Spring / Summer 2005

Head of the Table

By Elise Hart, Chairperson, Laurelhurst Nutrition
Advisory Committee (L.N.A.C.)

As the parent of three children, I'm always searching for creative ways to help educate them about healthy food choices. I hear the same sentiments from other parents too. With the growing national concern for childhood obesity rates and the desire to see more nutritious food choices in the school cafeteria, I was inspired to form the Laurelhurst Nutrition Advisory Committee (L.N.A.C.). I'm very pleased to introduce the first installment of the Laurelhurst Nutrition News. I hope our newsletters will become a helpful resource for you and your family.

Nutrition and health has always been a great passion of mine. Recently I attended a community open forum on how to get more fresh food into school cafeterias and I regularly attend informational meetings on children's nutrition. After hearing about the challenges of implementing healthy nutrition policies, I approached our principal, the Site Council and the PTA and proposed the formation of a nutrition committee at school. We are incredibly fortunate to have such progressive school leaders who have enthusiastically embraced the initiative to educate ourselves and our children about good food choices. Joining me on the Committee so far are Tiffany Jay, Charlotte Wayte, Vivian Syme, Maya Margarati, Debby Halperin, Kay Rawlings and Coco Sherman.

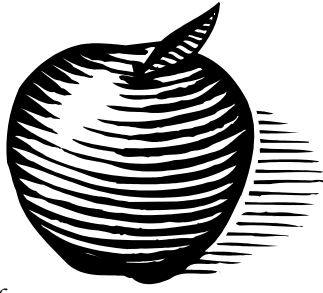
Probably the most visible aspect of school nutrition is the cafeteria lunch. You may be wondering how this committee will influence changes in the menu and when you might see those changes: Last fall the

Seattle School Board instituted a number of food policies "to improve the quality, variety, and appeal of food offered in the school meal program." This includes using "local, fresh, organic, non-irradiated, non-GMO foods whenever feasible." (from the School Board "Summary of Nutrition Policies and Procedures Adopted September 1, 2004"). Presently myself and others are working with the District Office of Child Nutrition to form an advisory committee that will aid them with implementation of these food policies. Our district serves 20,000 lunches a day, so progress will be slow but steady. In the meantime, our own, multi-talented Lunchroom Manager, Edith Pierce, does an incredible job with the resources she has available. She is also very supportive of seeing the new district food policies implemented.

The mission of L.N.A.C. is to integrate a comprehensive nutrition and health program that maximizes the students' opportunity to learn and grow. The goals of the L.N.A.C. 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.)

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While the District policy changes are very exciting, there are many improvements that can be made at our school. Many ideas are already in the works: Amie Santiago's 2nd graders are planting crops in the school garden (located on the southwest corner of the property) as part of a "soils" unit; there will soon be a bulletin board to spread the nutrition message; and a Harvest Celebration is in the planning stages for the fall.

I am honored to be heading up this effort and welcome any comments or ideas. You can find me on the playground before or after school, or contact me at laurelhurstonutrition@hotmail.com

To see the full report of the "Summary of Nutrition Policies and Procedures Adopted September 1, 2004" go to <http://www.seattleschools.org/area/board/committees.xml>

The Principal's Office

By Kathy Jolly, Principal

Nutrition plays such an important role in a child's success in school. I am very pleased to support the creation of the new Nutrition Advisory Committee, chaired by Elise Hart. Our goal is to raise awareness about nutrition and, hopefully, implement some school-wide changes. Poor nutrition can affect a student's academic performance, especially when combined with a lack of physical activity and inadequate rest.

Over the next few months you will be hearing more about nutrition at Laurelhurst. This first nutrition

newsletter is just a start. I'm delighted that some of our students have also contributed to this newsletter. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me.



PTA Perspective

By Coco Sherman & Kim Brillhart,
PTA Co-Presidents

Anyone who's dined at Café Laurelhurst would have to agree.... we can do better! And it's not just a matter of taste. More and more research documents that children learn better when they eat well and engage in regular physical activity. The formation of the Laurelhurst Nutrition Advisory Committee is an exciting development for our school. The mission of the Committee is aligned with the mission of the PTA to promote the health and welfare of children and youth. The National PTA is already on board with materials and resources addressing issues like childhood obesity, physical activity and nutrition. The Laurelhurst PTA has always supported the school with volunteers and funding for programs and staff that provide our children with the best advantages for learning. We are excited to extend that role to include this nutrition and health initiative that so clearly contributes to a child's health, wellness and ability to learn.

Here's to good health and good eating!

Deciphering the New Food Pyramid

The USDA has just unveiled its new food pyramid and it looks radically different than the old building block model we've seen hanging at the pediatrician's office. At first glance the new model looks complicated, but with a little delving, we've found it is actually a very handy tool!

The new pyramid is based on “Dietary Guidelines for Americans 2005,” which was published by the USDA and the Department of Health and Human Services. One of the key issues addressed in the guidelines was the concern for the rising obesity rates in American children: As Eric Bost, the USDA’s Undersecretary for food nutrition and consumer services said, “If we don’t change these trends, our children may be the first generation that cannot look forward to a longer life span than their parents.”

One of the key objectives in rolling out the new pyramid is to make Americans aware that dietary guidelines are not a “one size fits all” program – what is recommended for a five-year old is vastly different than what is recommended for a fifty-year old. The new pyramid is the result of the need for a much more individualized approach to food intake that encourages individuals to make healthier food choices.

To help us understand the pyramid, we started by checking the website www.mypyramid.gov. The site is easy to navigate and there is a tool that helps to calculate the daily intake of food types and portions based on age, gender and activity level. One of the best improvements is that the recommended amounts of food are calculated in ounces and cups, an easier way to measure than the old equivalency method, which was confusing to most. There is also a greater focus on exercise and how much one should get based on age. Lastly, there are more specific guidelines on the quality of food. For example, the guidelines recommend that half of the grains eaten should be whole grains – a “whole grain” being one that contains the entire grain kernel, as opposed to “refined grains,” where the bran and germ have been removed. The site even provides helpful hints on how to read food labels.

If you’d like to learn more about nutrition guidelines for the entire family, we recommend you give the website a try. In addition, there are many other local resources you can check out too.

www.pccnaturalmarkets.com – PCC offers free food tours of their stores, and has a wide variety of classes on nutrition, food and cooking. The website also has a section on their “Kid Picks” program – a children’s taste testing event. You can find the “Kid Picks” winners clearly labeled at the stores wherever you see a “Kid Picks” sign. There’s also a good resource section for parents on the web site.

www.wholefoodsmarket.com – Whole Foods Market offers food and nutrition classes as well as a wide variety of cooking classes. Their website has an extensive nutrition reference library and a helpful section on “feeding young children.”

www.traderjoes.com – Trader Joe’s provides in-store brochures on specialty diets, such as wheat/gluten-free, dairy-free and kosher. Their website has “frequently asked questions” about food, and a handy, “how to read a food labels” section.

Growing Enthusiasm While Growing A Garden

By Erin MacDougall
Ph.D. in Nutrition

The school garden offers a ripe environment for aligning hands-on learning to student achievement in the classroom. In the garden, students learn about the origin of their food, and observe the inter-relationships between plants, soil and insects. The garden lessons lead to an understanding and respect for all living systems as well as provide a venue to cultivate community with other students as they work together to plant, grow and harvest their vegetables.

These days, many children and families have a weakened relationship with where and how food is grown and the cultural value of family time spent together for meals. School gardens offer a renewed sense of wonder and experience for students to connect with their food in its natural, unprocessed form and to experience foods that are the most nutritious for growing bodies and for promoting life-long health.

Many children today eat substantial quantities of processed food of low nutritional value. As a society, we are already seeing the negative consequences of this, through soaring rates of pediatric obesity. One way to begin a revolutionary change to this pattern is to help children grow their own food and to eat these foods directly from the garden. The sensory experience of tasting foods in their most natural state engages all children on some level and can lead to a life long commitment to nourishing their body through healthy food. The Laurelhurst garden is being planted this spring with vegetables and will offer numerous learning experiences to students that align with educational goals in science, math, history, social studies, art and health.

Erin MacDougall teaches gardening and nutrition to K-5th graders at Sanislo Elementary School in West Seattle. She has a Ph.D. in Nutrition and is passionate about helping young people cultivate a relationship with whole foods through gardening and nutrition education. She can be reached at learnaboutyourfood@yahoo.com.

For more fun gardening activities for children, check out www.seattletilth.org

What's Cooking

Following are some recipe ideas from some of our Fourth grade students in Mr. Howard's class – thanks to Sonya, Zack, Riley, Nicola and Madeleine!

Breakfast Smoothie:

1 cup chopped bananas
1 cup frozen strawberry
1 cup frozen peach
1 cup vanilla yogurt
1 cup orange juice
Blend until smooth and enjoy!

Lunch Burrito

2 pieces of turkey breast
Lettuce
3 slices of tomato
Flour tortilla

Roll the turkey breast, tomatoes and lettuce in the tortilla. Slice into wheels or enjoy it whole.

Food For Thought

The fourth graders in Mr. Howard's class just finished a "food sciences" unit and the following are excerpts from a couple of articles the students wrote:

Fast Food

"One good thing is that you get the food really fast." Although fast food is laden with fat, "one good thing about it is that if you are in the freezing cold and you had a bunch of fat in your diet you would keep warm because then you will have a layer of fat inside your body." On the negative side of fat, there is saturated fat. These "are the fats that cause the most problems with people's health. Saturated fat comes in plants and animals but they usually come in animals. If you have a lot of cheese, ice cream, or eggs you will have a lot of saturated fat. The saturated fat will come in mostly everything at fast food restaurants. Another kind of bad thing for you at fast food restaurants is unsaturated fat. This kind of fat is not as bad for sure but it is still fat."

(Thank you to Ana, Kate, Courtney, Jong, Matthew H. and Mitchell!)

Preservatives

"A preservative is a type of chemical that helps food to last longer and to not get moldy fast. One of these foods that have preservatives in it is Twinkies. They have preservatives in them because Twinkies would start to get moldy without them in just a few days and a lot of gas stations and other convenience stores have Twinkies in them and they don't sell them out in just a few days." There is really only one reason why preservatives are good for us, and that's because they can "keep us from eating rotten foods."

(Many thanks to Grant, Reilly M., Julie, Kylah and Desirae)

Would You Like To Help?

Let us know if you'd like to join our team as we forge ahead with this incredibly exciting initiative. There are many projects planned and/or in the works, including:

- Managing and/or working in the school garden
- Flushing out ideas/projects that the committee may want to pursue

- Helping plan and implement the harvest celebration for next fall
- Investigating educational resources
- Helping teachers with nutrition projects
- Assisting with grant/donation procurement

Contact Us!

We'd love to hear from you.

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