



Laurelhurst Nutrition News

Winter 2007

Head of the Table

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

I have some exciting news as we head into the New Year: a Nutrition Alliance with four schools in greater north Seattle—Sacajawea, View Ridge, John Stanford Intl, and Loyal Heights—has been formed. Our main goal is to creatively collaborate on nutrition information we can share within our respective school communities, such as speakers, the newsletter, our logo and other resources. We're hoping to share our nutrition initiative successes and challenges to provide others with a smooth start at their own schools.

Regarding news from the District's Nutrition Advisory Committee, I continue to be a part of it, working in the area of nutrition education. Our latest victory came last summer when the School Board voted "yes" to instituting a nutrition education policy in our Seattle schools. Of course, money for this will need to be found, but one proverbial step at a time! In our three 5th grade classes, however, we've been given the privilege of piloting the District health program, The Great Body Shop. It began this fall and includes nutrition education throughout the program.

Our school garden is going to be put to good use. Ms. Dublin's 5th grade and Ms. Lara's 1st grade plan to take over the garden this winter. If you have any extra gardening tools, please contact them via email.

Now that the holiday season has wound down, and we have a bit more breathing room, perhaps we can all ponder the message that Michael Byrne, N.D., has for us in our lead article: What we eat is very related to proximity. By simply ensuring that we're surrounded by nutritious foods, we can up our quotient of healthy eating. Simple and sound advice. (See "Parent Resources" on page 4 for helpful "how to's" regarding snacks and meals.)

Let's make it a great "new" year!

Play With Your Food!

By Michael Byrne, N.D.



Coming from my years as a doctor and parent, I'd like to share some thoughts on the challenges of changing food habits. First, I'd like to sound a caution—be gentle and patient when changing diets. I am always very careful about the way I address issues of nutrition in my practice. Food is sacred. Most of us have strong attachments and feelings about foods we enjoy and consume. This is not a bad thing, as long as these foods provide the needed nutrition for the body and mind. However, our society does not encourage healthy eating. Junk food is everywhere.

Rather than take a strict stance on food, I encourage people to do experiments. I like to play with my food. And I encourage others to play with their food too. Challenge yourself to try new things. If you engender a spirit of adventure and fun with your food, your family may take the hint and join in.

Instead of trying to change habits directly, change the environment.

This is an important point. Most of us do not have strong will power. I tell patients, "If a plate of cookies was here on the table, we would be eating cookies. If a plate of carrots was here, we would be eating carrots.

What determines what we eat? Whatever is here!" I call this the law of proximity. This law states that the most likely food to go into your mouth is the food closest to your mouth. Sugar content, salt content, fat content, none of these is as powerful in motivating consumption as proximity. The easier it is to prepare and the closer at hand, the more likely it will be eaten.

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Laurelhurst Elementary School Joins Green Schools Network

This fall, Laurelhurst Elementary School 5th graders took on the task of changing the way the school handled lunchroom waste.

It all started last June, in 4th grade teacher Pat Howard's class. Students wondered what was going into the trash during the lunch hour. So they dumped it all out to see. After carefully sorting and weighing the waste, the students identified approximately 185 pounds of waste per day that could be diverted from the dumpster if a composting program was started at the school.

Luckily for Laurelhurst, Lawton Elementary School in Magnolia had just completed a year's trial of a composting program in conjunction with Beth Dolan, Resource Conservation Specialist with Seattle Public Schools and Toni Mommersteeg Moore from Cedar Grove Compost Company. Their success opened the door for other schools.

Meanwhile, back at Laurelhurst Elementary, this year's 5th grade teaching team of Pat Howard, Grace Dublin, and Kristin Capps agreed to take on the compost project with their students. With the support of our principal, Kathy Jolly, Toni Mommersteeg Moore came from Cedar Grove and trained the children on how to sort lunchroom waste so that Cedar Grove could pick it up each week and use it in their commercial composting operation.

How would the 5th grade train the rest of the school? They brainstormed skits and mini seminars, which they ultimately presented to all grades, from kindergarten on up. They also made educational posters, which were placed around the school.

"The little kids listen better than the big ones."

Leif, 5th grader

Starting November 1st, the whole school began sorting lunchroom scraps. Teacher Pat Howard observed, "The kids are better now about sorting the waste themselves." Gary Jablinski, school custodian noticed that the school went from six bags of trash per lunch, to one.

Much of the trash created had been from the cardboard lunch trays used for hot lunches. These can now be composted. **The school was immediately able to eliminate one whole dumpster's worth of trash each week, for a total of over 500 pounds of waste diverted from the landfill and turned into compost.** In addition, the reduction in dumpsters saves the Seattle Public Schools money, allowing them to cover the cost of the composting program and still have a margin!



5th grader, Dora, gives 2nd grader, Emily, a hand



5th graders, Leif and Neha, help other students get the hang of sorting their trash

Parents and staff have commented on how special it is to see students teaching each other, thinking about what they are throwing away, and investing in making the world a better place, one composted banana peel at a time.

Treeswing Partners with Seattle Public Schools



Treeswing, a local non-profit organization, is dedicated to improving the health and wellness of our children by creating environments that support nutrition, movement, and play. Through prevention, education and collaboration, we seek to reverse the alarming trends in children's health in order to foster generations of empowered individuals and vibrant communities.

Treeswing's mission, to create grassroots programs in order to improve the quality of life for children, led us to our first major project. In September of 2006, we partnered with the Seattle Public Schools in the adoption and implementation of a new physical education curriculum focusing on lifetime wellness. This ambitious three-year project will immediately touch the lives of all 46,000 children enrolled in Seattle Public Schools, as well as involve their educators, parents and caregivers. Our goal is to not only provide opportunities for physical activity and nutrition education, but also to get Seattle families to engage in all of these opportunities.

Based in Seattle, WA, Treeswing serves the children, families and communities of the Pacific Northwest. Please visit our website at www.treeswing.org for more information about our organization, as well as for fun ideas on how to get your family eating better and moving more. We are currently seeking individuals to join our effort, through board membership, volunteering, and financial contributions.

Please contact us for more information at: info@treeswing.org or (206) 443-8427.

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Think of your behavior as a stream. The stream is traveling east, but you would like it to go a bit more north. Trying to change behavior directly is like using a bucket and throwing water northward—tiring, and ultimately frustrating. If instead, you start digging a trench to the north, eventually you will get the whole stream to flow that way. It will seem effortless once it happens. You changed the environment to support the goal you wanted.

So stock the house with healthy stuff (fruit, veggies, nuts... you know this) and make these items easy to prepare and access for everyone in the household. Refuse to buy some of the junk food. If it's not around, you and your family will eat something else.

I try to encourage patients with one important fact: children will not starve themselves. Most children will actually adjust more easily than most adults to new foods, though their reactions to change are sometimes more extreme

Dr. Byrne is a naturopathic physician, a counselor and a life coach with Seattle Healing Arts Center (www.seattlehealingarts.com).

Pacific Science Center Offers Interactive Nutrition Exhibits

The next time you take the kids to the Pacific Science Center, check out some of their terrific nutrition-related exhibits. One fun, interactive exhibit is the Nutrition Café (located on the Plaza Level), which offers several computer games.

- * Nutrition Sleuth—read a story and figure out the missing nutrient
- * Grab-a-Grape—interesting, food-related trivia questions
- * Have-a-Bite Café—build a meal and find out its nutritional value

The Nutrition Café is a joint effort of the Pacific Science Center and Washington State Dairy Council.



Let Us Inspire You! New LNAC Website Content

Last spring, the Laurelhurst Nutrition Advisory Committee launched its website, which was featured the next week as a nutrition resource in *The Seattle Times*!

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

New items on the website :

- * More inspiring lunch and snack ideas collected from a range of parents and nutrition experts
- * After-school sports snack ideas—a great resource when you realize you need to bring snack to the next game!

Visit the LNAC website at:

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

And share it with others!

Parent Resources

- * For some family snack planning, visit the LNAC bulletin board outside the cafeteria for a snack guide that all of you can fill out together.
- * How about doing some cooking with your kids in the new year? Mollie Katzen's *Pretend Soup and Other Real Recipes: A Cookbook for Preschoolers and Up* and *Honest Pretzels: And 64 Other Amazing Recipes for Cooks Ages 8 and Up* provide colorful, easy-to-follow recipes for all to enjoy.
- * Do you have nutrition-related questions about your children? Log onto www.askdrsears.com and click on "family nutrition" for hints on everything from "brainy breakfasts" to "grazing." Check out Dr. Sears' book, *The Family Nutrition Book*, which is a wealth of information and very readable.



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!

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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 Dr. Michael Byrne, Wendy Katzman, Mindy McGovern, and Elyse Rowe for your newsletter contributions!