30,000 Students Eat a Healthy School Meal on Food Day (and Every Day)

Nutritious school food cited by Parents Magazine as one reason San Francisco is on the top of its list for healthiest cities to settle down.

October 21, 2011 (San Francisco) – SFUSD and its meal provider, Preferred Meal Systems (PMS), are promoting Food Day activities that support the district’s ongoing goal of fostering child nutrition and healthier lifestyle habits.

Food Day will be celebrated across the country and promotes the importance of four key nutrition and health-related topics:

- Eating a balanced diet
- Leading an active lifestyle to promote good health
- Encouraging local farming
- Expanding access to the hungry and those in need

In honor of Food Day, Preferred Meal Systems will make a donation based on the total number of meals served on October 24 to support the expansion of student nutrition programs. Students at two schools, Bret Hart Elementary and Francis Scott Key Elementary, will meet with farmers Geoff Ratto and Marlene Campbell, who help grow the foods served in their school lunches.

Additionally, PMS will distribute a Food Facts & Fun Booklet, which contains game and trivia reinforcing Food Day’s four key nutrition and health-related topics. They will also conduct a Healthier Foods for a Healthier Me Art Contest. The winner will be revealed on a delivery truck in January and the winning school will have a donation made in its name to the food pantry of its choice.

Parents Magazine recently gave San Francisco an “A” for “Healthy Schools.”
“The City by the Bay rose to the top of our list in part because of its gutsy moves to bring healthier foods to schools. San Fran booted soda and high-fat, empty-calorie food out of its schools in 2004 (five years before the state did) and was one of the first places in the country to push for school gardens,” wrote the editors.

Each school meal served daily includes fresh produce and whole grains; there are no trans fats and instead of juice students get a fresh fruit at breakfast. Currently, there are 40 salad bars and SFUSD has increased the amount of dark green and orange vegetables such as romaine lettuce, spinach, sweet potatoes, and limiting starchy vegetables.

“We know that eating right during the school day is absolutely essential for our students to be ready for learning,” said SFUSD Superintendent Carlos Garcia. “I’m proud to say that the food we serve them every day meets today’s high standards for healthy eating.”

Meals served at SFUSD do not contain artificial flavoring or colors and SFUSD does not permit trans fats except for naturally occurring fats in beef and cheese, which are not considered a health risk. All deep fat fried foods are prohibited.

Whole grain breads are offered from local vendors and whole grain pasta and pizza crusts are served. SFUSD delivers hot and cold breakfasts on a rotating basis to provide variety to all students. In addition, six high schools now offer a “Grab and Go” breakfast program which allows students who don’t want to get to school early and sit in the cafeteria to eat breakfast on their way to class or even in their first period class.

On average, 30,000 San Francisco public school children eat breakfast and/or lunch at school daily; 62% of SFUSD students qualify for free or reduced lunch.

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