We’re halfway to summer!

As you can tell by these pictures, some of our kitchen workers really get into whatever the school plans for building promotions. I have been pleasantly surprised when I come into the kitchens and see people participating in these promotions, I can tell the kids like it too! As I always have my camera with me, I love to take pictures of the great things we do to share with my boss and buddies in other school districts. Give me a heads-up if something is happening in your cafeteria, I’d love to come see!

With that in mind, I love to see how our food is presented so nicely. Some schools obviously have more room to display things like our entrees. Other schools (typically the older ones) don’t have as much room so it becomes more challenging. One thing that has helped in the past is to bring our area chef from Salem down for visits. Her name is Delores, some of you have met her in the past. She will show us ways that we can not only attractively display our food, but save us some steps in work flow at the same time. If Delores comes to your school, have an open mind, as she’s here to help us be the best we can be!

Also I have the pleasure of bringing my boss with me to the schools every week. I wanted to say how proud I am to show you guys off! I’ve seen and tasted some of the best food I’ve ever had in recent weeks! Our staff really steps up and produces wonderful food for our students. Just the other day I was at one of our high schools and I was really so impressed by the quality of the food. The students and staff I spoke with were eager to agree with this as well. Thank you for all that you do!

-Rick

Oregon Healthy Challenge Results 4

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Food For Thought

December, 2009

Honoring Our People

Introducing the “High Five” Award.
At our opening meeting this summer, we had a fantastic award ceremony that honored our people. I handed out dozens of awards, and let everyone know that two more awards would be coming this year. The first one is our first installment of the “high five” award. This award was created in the District I was previously at (thanks Sharon!), and goes to the person who has the best cost-savings idea that is implemented in at 4J. The first High Five goes to BERND PORTER of the 4J warehouse.

This award really is for a lifetime of finding and utilizing things that would be otherwise thrown out. He is ALWAYS on the lookout to reuse items and save the district money. In fact, I believe my entire office has been furnished by Bernd, not costing the district a penny!

Keep those ideas coming! Nothing is too small. I have a file of ideas already of some things that people have reused and sent to other schools. Just drop me an email to reuse something in another school you’re not using!

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Nicole’s Nuggets

Nutritional Information from Your School Dietitian

In addition to the regional produce we feature daily, 4J Nutrition Services has teamed up with the Willamette Food and Farm Collation to bring locally grown products into our school cafeterias. Each month an Oregon-grown fruit or vegetable is highlighted and served weekly in all 4J District cafeterias as part of the Harvest of the Month Program. In addition, 4J Nutrition Services has signed a Declaration of Cooperation with the Oregon Solutions Lane County Food Distribution Project, stating that the district will look for opportunities to integrate local foods into the cafeteria based on availability, acceptability and price.

Since the beginning of this school year, we have proudly offered tomatoes from Thistledown Farm in Lane County, Radishes from Cal Farms in Oregon City, Marionberries from Columbia Fruit in the Willamette Valley, and Cranberries from Clearwater Cranberries in Bandon. To find out what other fruits and vegetables we plan to feature this year, visit http://www.4j.lane.edu/nutrition/ and select the Local Produce/ Harvest of the Month tab.

You can also find additional information on your school’s menu. Look for the Harvest logo to see which days your school will be offering this month’s featured fruit or vegetable.

Another benefit to this is for students to try some unique items that they might not try otherwise! This month, we are highlighting fresh cranberries. Many kitchens are trying different ways to prepare them with fantastic results!

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Training

This Fall we were able to send some of our employees to an all-state “Kitchen Manager” training in Battleground, WA after taking a year off. This was something that used to be a yearly event, and it looks like the trend will continue next year once again. Shown are the people who went on this year’s training.

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Elementary Culinary Update

The first annual 4J Elementary Culinary Competition will be held at South Eugene High School on President’s Day, Monday, February 15th. Packets have been handed out to every 4th and 5th grade classroom in town, and students are submitting recipes for “healthy after school snacks.” Two lucky finalists will be chosen to compete in an “Iron-Chef” style competition on President’s day. Students from South Eugene’s South Fork Catering program will on hand to be group leaders for the young chefs.

Students will arrive at 8:30 am, judging takes place between noon and 1:00 pm. This event is open to the public, come see what wonderful creations these kids can do!
Food for Thought

December 2009

Random Thoughts

Meals

We opened this year with a big opportunity to increase the number of meals served. Due to a lot of absenteeism, our counts have been lower this year as compared to last year. However, there is a light at the end of the tunnel! After Thanksgiving, we’re starting to see a big jump in participation at all levels as students return to school in bigger numbers! We need to keep improving in this effort, as we have an opportunity to provide great tasting meals to thousands of students in Eugene.

TV cameras at Cal Young

Rick and Nicole had an opportunity to get some “face time” on a local TV news channel. A news crew wanted to do a story on the cost of producing fresh, healthy options to the school lunch menu and were able to do a news story and film in the courtyard as well as the cafeteria and kitchen at Cal Young Middle School. Rick spoke of some of the challenges in producing a nutritious meal, while at the same time being cost-effective for the District. Nicole was able to use her skills as a Registered Dietitian and give some more specific nutritional information to the news crew.

Wild Card: Recipe of the Month

Look here each month for something different. Employee spotlight, Highlighted school, etc.

From Nicole’s House: “Curry Butternut Squash Soup”

Heat oil in large stock pot. Add onion, garlic and ginger. Cook 1 minute, stirring frequently. Add stock and bring to a boil. Add squash to boiling broth and cover for 30 min. on low-med heat until squash is tender. If squash is pre-cooked then reduce cooking time to 15 minutes. Add milk, lemon juice, sugar, salt & pepper mix thoroughly. Puree mixture in small batches until there are no large chunks and texture is smooth.

Comming this Spring

4J to Host 4th Annual “Chefolution”

Eugene School District is proud to announce that they’re hosting the fourth annual Willamette Valley High School Culinary Competition (or “Chefolution” for short). This event has been hosted by Albany School District the past three years, and now Eugene has the opportunity to host it.

The competition has had teams from the following school districts in the past: Eugene, Albany, Dallas, Salem, Lebanon, Sweet Home, Corvallis and Philomath. There will no doubt be other teams that will be interested this year. For instance, Marist has expressed interest to field a team, as well as teams from Central School District in Monmouth.

The grand prize for the event has been judged as “elegance on a budget.” This is to make it so the students find creative ways to produce elegant food, while at the same time watch their costs. This will encourage teams to not spend much money on their food. The contest is sponsored by Sodexo, and the teams provide their own food and supplies for the competition.

Eugene has done well in the past. A group from South Fork Catering at South Eugene has won the following awards:

- Best Salad: 2009
- Best Entrée: 2007
- Judges Choice (Best of show): 2007 & 2009

Good luck to them this year as well as other potential Eugene teams.

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Website Update

Have you been to our website recently?

Things have really changed on our district website. It is becoming more user-friendly and a great resource for employees, parents, community and students.

As of now, there are many tabs to explore. Some of the tabs we are working on that we’re excited about:

**CLASSROOM RESOURCES:** In this tab a student or teacher can find a huge amount of activities that teach about healthy eating habits as well as other things such as fitness, cooperation, plus math, reading and more!

**NUTRITION RESOURCES:** a place where the community can go to get specific nutritional and diet information. We have all our Allergy information here as well as links to other diet resources.

**MENUS:** All our menus are posted here.

**NEWSLETTER:** Copies of these newsletters are posted here. We always get requests for these, so now they’re in one place!

**CULINARY COMPETITION:** As noted elsewhere in this issue, we’re doing a competition, and this is the place to go to download all information for it. We’re looking forward to introduce other promotions in this fashion.

We are always updating and making additions to this site. There are plans to do a tab that has all of our promotions, announcements and results of those promotions on it. Also, we are always looking for ideas of what would be helpful to have on the site. If you have any ideas, please drop us a line.

Go to www.4j.lane.edu/nutrition to check it out!

Oregon Healthy Challenge Results

The results are in...

For the second year in a row, Eugene School District competed in the Healthy Oregon High School Challenge. This program is in correlation with Sodexo’s Healthy Choices program. This year, Sodexo’s will donate a plaque to the winning schools as well as a travelling trophy to display at the winning schools. Schools are based on OSAA classification (1A-2A-3A & 4A-5A-6A). Forty-two of Sodexo’s Oregon high schools competed to win the grand prize. The challenge ran from November 1-30.

Points were given for combo meals purchased at Cross Roads Café as well as select healthy a la carte choices during the promotional period of November 1st through the 30th. This year, the winning school turned out to be Roseburg High School. Eugene’s schools fared well. Here’s a rundown of how we placed out of 22 high schools: Placing highly was Churchill, who was tenth place out of 22 in their division!

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