

KIWI CLASS LEADERS *A spotlight on inspiring and successful school food programs*

Grady High School

Ever thought that the odds of having a healthy lunch were stacked against your child, whose public school's lunch program must meet state and federal standards and is supplied by a big food company? Take a look at Grady High School, a public school in Atlanta.

Miriam Archibong was the student president of Grady's Vegetarian Club in 2004, and the club wanted more vegetarian meal options on the school menu. Archibong approached Susan Bertucci, a dietician for the school system's food service provider Sodexo, and asked what could be done. The answer: "Plenty."

Bertucci first surveyed the students at Grady—did they want vegetarian options; would they buy them? Given their positive response, Sodexo decided to green-light the "Creations" line, named after the new

vegetarian section of Grady's cafeteria. The Creations menu includes such foods as veggie pasta lo mein with meatless egg rolls, veggie burgers, bean-and-cheese quesadillas—and, of course, vegetarian pizza. In order to make Creations an official cafeteria section, Bertucci also had to satisfy government protein requirements, and found reliable—and tasty—sources in soy crumbles (a meat alternative), cheese and yogurt.

It's a bit more expensive than regular school food, says Bertucci, but the cost is balanced out by "commodity products," or USDA foods supplied by government funding. Fortunately, vegetarians aren't the only ones who wait on the Creations line: Roughly 1,100 students eat in the cafeteria daily, and 225 of them choose Creations. "Students like the choice," says Bertucci.

Bureaucracy hasn't limited their options, nor should it limit your child's. Bertucci's suggestions:

- 1 Have lunch at your child's school. Was he exaggerating, or is the cafeteria really serving trans fat mystery meat?
- 2 Get involved with the PTA and attend the school district's nutrition board meetings.
- 3 Win the school principal's support. She/he is the one who works directly with the school's food service.
- 4 Start small. If an entirely new line is too big of a step, many food services will sell single items if the demand is there. Bertucci receives requests for soymilk, almond milk and fresh fruits and vegetables—and, she says, all can be easily met.

—ANNE FICKLEN



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Announcing The Kiwi Crusaders™ Award

Celebrating excellence in school meals.

Many news stories talk about what's wrong with school food programs—here at KIWI, we like to talk about what's right. So, we're celebrating the schools and school systems that have made a commitment to serving students healthy foods. If this sounds like your school, we invite you to nominate it for our prestigious annual award. We'll be recognizing healthy school food programs in three categories:

- ♦ Preschool
- ♦ Public School/School System K–12
- ♦ Private School/School System K–12

To enter, visit www.kiwimagonline.com. Entries must be received by September 30, 2007. Visit our website for rules and details.

The three Grand Prize winners will receive \$3,500 each and a feature story in KIWI Magazine about the school and its meal program.

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