

## New workshop prevents 'lunchbox let down' at local elementary schools



Written By **MARNI WALSH**

Farm to School Program Coordinator Adelle Barr-Klouman reports that over 70 attendees from seven area schools and one daycare took part in the Lunchbox Toolbox Workshop at Hyland Heights Elementary School on May 9.

The workshop presented healthy appealing solutions that helps to avoid 'lunchbox let down' for school-aged children.

The event was set up with local food professionals at five different stations in the school auditorium.

'Topics ranged from what is a healthy lunch, to how to talk to kids about food, getting kids involved in making lunches, and ways to keep school lunches interesting and incorporate new foods,' Ms. Barr-Klouman tells the Free Press.

She added, 'Participants got to taste, make and take egg cups, rice-wrap veggie rolls, quesadillas and protein bites, and talk to chefs, farmers and dietitians who are passionate about food.'

The Farm to School Program is a highly successful project of Headwaters Communities in Action (HCIA) and the Food and Farming Alliance (HFFA.) The workshop was a joint effort between the school councils of Primrose Elementary School and Hyland Heights Elementary.

?Student nutrition has proven links to academic achievement, behaviour and readiness to learn at school.? Ms. Barr-Klouman says. ?Parents were keen and excited to learn tips on not only what foods to provide but how to offer new or unaccepted foods in an engaging and encouraging way.?

For example, she says Chef Phil Dewar demonstrated how using a vegetable peeler to slice veggies can help kids get over the texture barrier of facing a whole carrot for example, and how wrapping in gluten-free rice paper is great way to hide fresh veggies or repackage dinner leftovers.

Registered Dietitian, Jacalyn Dryland, explored issues such as different types of hunger at the workshop. Ms. Barr-Klouman says ?Jacalyn encouraged us to be aware of the language we use around food and recognize the difference between physical hunger - feeling hungry, tummy rumbling - and heart hunger - emotional or situational reasons we eat.?

She says parents learned, for example, that saying ?I'm exhausted, I think I'll read a book for a while? (or call a friend, or go for a walk) sets a better example than saying ?I'm exhausted, I need a piece of chocolate.?

Grand Valley farmer and chef Rebecca Landman inspired kids to get creative by offering them options to make egg cups using mini-muffin tins.

?I was amazed at how creative they all were, coming up with combinations I wouldn't have thought of,? says Rebecca.

She added, ? When kids get cooking they have a bigger appreciation for their food and are so excited to taste their creations!?

Adelle Barr-Klouman says, ?Many parents stated that following the workshop they plan to involve their children more in meal preparation and lunch planning - starting at the grocery store or market by shopping together.? She says, ?Feedback was overwhelmingly positive, revealing that parents found the information valuable; they came away with practical solutions for school lunches, and they would like to see more sessions like this in future.?

To inquire about Farm to School or other programs from HFFA, or to access the workshop guide and recipes, contact Farm to School Program Coordinator Adelle Barr-Klouman at [food@headwaterscommunities.org](mailto:food@headwaterscommunities.org).