



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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NEW PROGRAM TO ELIMINATE SODA FROM MIDDLE AND HIGH SCHOOLS IN FAIRFAX COUNTY

Real Food For Kids (RFFK) announces a new pilot program that will be in eight Fairfax County Public Schools (FCPS) this fall. These middle and high schools will remove regular sodas from student access and offer a new assortment of more healthful beverage options. FCPS' Food and Nutrition Services (FNS), the school board, and RFFK have been working for several months to put the program into place for the start of the 2013-14 school year.

Ryan McElveen, School Board Member-At-Large, spearheaded the program to ensure students have healthful drinks available in the vending machines after school for sports practice, clubs, and other school activities.

"I am optimistic that our students will appreciate the opportunity to try new, healthier beverage options," says McElveen. "And I am proud that FCPS Food and Nutrition Services have decided to take leadership on the soda issue instead of merely waiting for federal guidelines to be enforced next year."

"Healthier school food means healthier food throughout the school, including vending machines," says Pat Hynes, school board member for the Hunter Mill district, who also has been heavily involved in the school food issue. "I'm grateful to FNS and the pilot schools for being willing to take on this opportunity to improve vending machine choices."

JoAnne Hammermaster, president of RFFK, says this is just the first step in the process of improving beverage options.

"It is very important that Fairfax is starting this project," says Hammermaster. "Studies have shown that kids today are getting 50% of the increase in their daily calories from beverages. RFFK supports these changes to help impact the rising trend in obesity rates over the last three decades."

While RFFK is pleased about the removal of regular soda, Hammermaster is quick to note that the group does not support some of the beverage options that are still available to students.

"Many of the options still contain a high percentage of sugar," she says. "But we understand that this is a major step in the right direction, are happy to support it, and recognize that Food and Nutrition Services is making a big statement by implementing this program."

Teachers will not be impacted by the changes, as regular and diet soda will still be available in teacher lounges. All high schools and four middle schools currently have vending machines in student hallways. The soda machines are required to be off during school hours.

Hammermaster says the immediate response from several high schools is a very positive sign, and she is hopeful that more schools will participate in the program.

About *Real Food For Kids*

As the local face of the national school wellness movement, Real Food For Kids is committed to working collaboratively to increase the quantities of healthy foods in Fairfax County Public Schools and supporting programs that educate students and their families to make healthier lifestyle choices. Real Food For Kids has successfully advocated for an independent assessment of the current food program, aiming to find innovative ways to bring more fresh, less processed foods to students. Strong school board support also has resulted in a pilot kitchen at George C. Marshall High School in Falls Church, opening in fall 2013. The ribbon cutting ceremony for this project will be held on Thursday, September 12, 2013 at 9:00am. More information on Real Food For Kids is available at www.realfoodforkids.org.