

COOKING UP CHANGE®

Students Transforming the Future of School Food

THE BIG PICTURE

Healthy Schools Campaign launched Cooking up Change® in Chicago in 2007. This event engages student chefs and the broader community in a dialogue about school food reform and the need for more resources for our nation's school meal program. HSC is now building on the success of this flagship Chicago event by working with local sponsors in cities across the U.S. to host Cooking up Change® healthy cooking contests.

Kid Healthy, based in Orange County and serving the needs of Southern California families, is pleased to host the 1st California event. The finalists from all national competitions, including Orange County, are invited to compete in the national finals in Washington, DC.

In addition to spotlighting remarkable student talent, Cooking up Change® brings attention to the challenges of serving fresh, healthy school meals and the need for reform in our school food system. This focus is especially important and timely as provisions of the recent reauthorization of the Child Nutrition Act roll out and the leaders across the U.S. respond to First Lady Michelle Obama's call to action to end childhood obesity in this generation, particularly focusing on school food.

The unique strength of Cooking up Change® comes from its power to elevate a meal and a message created by students so that it reaches their peers nationwide. It also reaches the elected leaders whose decisions about school food policy affect student health so directly.

For the past 3 years, student teams have taken part in a Capitol Hill briefing on the future of school food. In addition, student-designed meals from the contest have been served in schools across the country as well as in the U.S. House of Representatives cafeteria. Perhaps most tellingly, lunches from Cooking up Change® have been integrated into the school food menus in Chicago Public Schools and are now served regularly throughout the district. A testament to the students' skills in creating recipes that meet real-life constraints for ingredients and preparation; and their ability to design healthy lunches that are popular with their peers.

As student chef Cari Smith said when she spoke at a Capitol Hill briefing on school food reform, hosted by Healthy Schools Campaign, "I learned that change really can happen if we all help it along. I can help change what we eat in schools."



This event is part of Healthy Schools Campaign's National Cooking up Change® Series.

