

SOUTH EUCLID-LYNDHURST SCHOOLS TO START FIRST FARM TO SCHOOL PROGRAM IN CUYAHOGA COUNTY

CLEVELAND – Sept. 21, 2010 – A partnership between the Cuyahoga County Board of Health, AVI Fresh and Red Basket Farm will result in students in the South Euclid Lyndhurst School District receiving fresh, local lettuce in their cafeteria line beginning in Fall 2010. To kick off this innovative initiative, the District will host a food tasting of the produce at Greenview Upper Elementary School on September 29 from 11:20 a.m. to 2:05 p.m. Both the superintendent and health commissioner will be present.

Students in the district will now consume lettuce that has traveled 59 miles, as opposed to the approximately 2,600 miles it currently travels. This reduction in mileage means foods stay fresher and longer and that the school district is reducing its carbon footprint. Once implemented, South Euclid Lyndhurst Schools will have the first Farm to School program in Cuyahoga County and will serve as a local best practice to other school districts county-wide.

The Farm to School program, which integrates produce from a local grower into a school's foodservice, aims to increase the supply of fresh, local nutritious foods, develop smarter food decision-making among students, support connections with local farmers, develop community connections, and foster reinvestment in the state and local economy.

The Farm to School program, currently taking place in more than 2,105 school districts in 45 states, has come about as the result of rising obesity rates among adolescents and adults, and the decline of the family farm.

“In Cuyahoga County, a recent study indicated that 36 percent of kindergarteners are either overweight or obese. Childhood obesity can lead to early onset of chronic diseases like diabetes and heart disease, which effect quality of life and raises health care costs for business and government well into the future,” said Terry Allan, health commissioner, Cuyahoga County Board of Health.

“We're very excited to be the first District in the region to have this program in place. This new initiative will greatly enhance the well being of our students. We hope that with fresher meal options, our students will make healthier lifestyle choices both at home and school,” said Superintendent Dr. William Zelei.

Growing awareness of the adverse health consequences of poor nutritional choices have expanded interest in the nutritional quality of food served in school cafeterias. During the school day, children eat roughly one-third of their nutritional needs while eating at school. However, only two percent of school-aged children meet the Food Guide Pyramid recommendations for all five food groups. Additionally, less than one in five children consumes the recommended number of fruits and vegetables, and the vast majority consumes excessive amounts of fat and sodium.

Red Basket Farm, an integral partner in this Farm to School pilot project, is a small family-owned farm located in Kinsman, Ohio. The farm follows sustainable and natural farming

practices, and the produce served in the district will be picked at the peak of its ripeness. Floyd Davis, owner and grower at the farm, will plant vegetables to meet the specific needs of the South Euclid Lyndhurst Schools' school lunch program. In the future Floyd hopes to supply the district with produce year-round by utilizing indoor growing practices.

The initiative aims to expand in the future by increasing the amount of produce offerings on the school lunch menu. Additionally, the project will offer educational opportunities for students and staff, participate in sustainable practices such as recycling and composting food waste at the farm, and will explore the use of school gardening as a hands-on learning tool.

Greenview Upper Elementary School is located on 1825 South Green Rd., South Euclid, Ohio 44121.

In 2010, the South Euclid-Lyndhurst School District was rated "Effective" by the Ohio Department of Education. The District has more than 4,400 students from the South Euclid and Lyndhurst communities and is led by Superintendent Dr. William Zelei. The following schools comprise the District: Brush High School, Memorial Junior High School, Greenview Upper Elementary, Adrian Elementary School, Rowland Elementary School and Sunview Elementary School.

The Cuyahoga County District Board of Health has been serving the cities, villages and townships of Cuyahoga County since 1919. As Ohio's largest health district by population, servicing a major metropolitan area, the Board of Health provides a broad range of quality driven public health programs and services. The Cuyahoga County Board of Health values the well being of each of the 885,000 residents in our Health District and for over 85 years has been committed to improving health and quality of life through innovative, scientifically based public health programs that Prevent disease and injury, Promote positive health outcomes and Provide critical services.

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