



Kids First Wellness Advocates Series  
Breakfast Promotion  
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Communications

Providence - Students who eat a healthy breakfast come to school better prepared to learn. To encourage an increase in the number of school breakfasts served statewide, the RI Community Food Bank partnered with the RI Department of Education and United Natural Foods (UNFI) to offer School Breakfast Awards of \$1,000 each to schools that had over 50% participation in their school breakfast program for at least a month. To be eligible for the awards, schools had to have a 40% or more free or reduced-price eligible student population and they had to serve morning meals that met the state nutritional requirements (RINR).

Twenty-three applications were received by the Food Bank, and throughout the months of March and April, seventeen Rhode Island schools received the award. This translated into hundreds of Rhode Island students, some that might not have had anything to eat at all before coming to school, eating a healthy breakfast daily.

“In my opinion, the School Breakfast Awards were a huge success,” said Andrew Schiff, Chief Executive Officer of the RI Community Food Bank. “The schools that received awards demonstrate that it is all about leadership. When the principal and school staff support the breakfast program and make the changes necessary to improve access to having a healthy meal - letting children eat after the morning bell, serving breakfast in the classroom - the participation goes up significantly. If we want children to learn, they need a healthy breakfast.”

In Providence, seven schools increased their breakfast participation and worked with community partners to serve morning meals that incorporated fresh Rhode Island grown products like RI grown Carrot Breakfast Bread and RI Potatoes in Breakfast Egg Wraps. Other healthy offerings included strawberry and blueberry yogurt

parfaits and whole wheat English muffin egg sandwiches with salsa. Adhering to the RINR criteria, a minimum of 2 fruits or veggies were served at every breakfast. In several schools, special guests - Sodexo mascot Lift-Off and RI Grown Ms. Apple - were on hand for photo ops and helped to encourage more elementary students into the cafeterias.

According to Lori Richard, Sodexo Operations Manager for the Providence Schools, the result of the month long promotion in all nine schools was that there was an increase of 1150 breakfasts being served.

“Our Breakfast Award Promotion went really well,” said Richard. “In the final analysis, it was determined that many of the participating schools only missed the award by one, two, or three days over the course of the month, but every school that participated was a success.”



For UNFI, a distributor of natural and organic foods that recently relocated to Providence, partnering with the RI Food Bank for the Breakfast Awards gave them a chance to help build a relationship within their new community and address the fight against hunger in their own backyard. It was also a chance to support education about healthy eating to the youngest Rhode Islanders.

“The Breakfast Awards gave UNFI the opportunity to do some outreach to children about eating healthy,” said Lisa Madsen, UNFI Director of Sustainability and Social Responsibility. “Our goal was to educate children about the importance of eating

a healthy breakfast before a school day. A nutritious breakfast is an essential part of learning and growing.”

For healthy school food advocates, the Breakfast Awards demonstrated that community partnerships and a commitment to help students can be accomplished by promoting something as simple and as straightforward as serving some fruit and yogurt before class. By working together, organizations can help ensure that more RI students have access to a healthy morning meal. Not only does a healthy breakfast give students the energy and focus needed to learn, it can also set the tone for an entire day of education, enrichment and excitement.



*“When you wake up in the morning, Pooh, what’s the first thing you say to yourself?” said Piglet.*

*“What’s for breakfast?” said Pooh. “Why, what do you say, Piglet?”*

*“I say - ‘I wonder what’s going to happen exciting today?’” said Piglet.*

*Pooh nodded thoughtfully. ‘It’s the same thing,’ he said.*  
**A. A. Milne, 'The House at Pooh Corner'**