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### Report as of October 16, 2017

As a follow-up to my September report, which focused on allergy awareness, I would like to mention an initiative that has gained recognition for raising awareness of food allergies and promoting inclusion of all trick-or-treaters during the Halloween season. This initiative is “The Teal Pumpkin Project”. To participate, pick up some inexpensive toys and place a teal painted pumpkin or a teal sign outside of your house. This shows that you have non-food treats to hand out for children with food allergies. (You may also hand out candy; The Teal Pumpkin Project encourages you to keep the candy separate from the non-food items). A sign may be downloaded and printed off of the Food Allergy Research and Education (FARE) website. The following is an example of one of the signs that may be downloaded off of FARE’s website:



The website also includes suggestions for non-food treats to be passed out on Halloween as well as at Halloween parties and events. Please see the FARE website for resources and ideas.

<https://www.foodallergy.org/education-awareness/teal-pumpkin-project/faqs#what's>

October is a month that is jam-packed with health and wellness awareness events. The events range from global and national mental health awareness, to bullying prevention, to bus safety, eye safety, breast cancer awareness, etc. Please see the following link for all of the awareness events that are taking place this month across New York State as well as the nation and the world.

<http://www.nyspta.org/Advocacy/ANewsbriefs-0917.cfm#Wellness>.

For the month of October, I chose to focus on healthy habits and healthy eating.

**October is Eat Better, Eat Together Month:** Among the awareness events for October is the initiative, “Eat Better, Eat Together Month”. Unfortunately, the frequency of family meals has been declining over time in the United States. The number of families that report never or seldom eat together is growing while the number of families that say they usually eat together is decreasing. By far the greatest barrier to family meals is the busy schedules of parents, children, and teens. Other barriers include: lack of cooking skills, family members not liking the same foods, lack of planning, competition with electronic media, not knowing how to engage in conversation, not having a table or other place to eat together, arguing at dinnertime, and teens’ desire to be independent.

It is well established that, when families share mealtime, many benefits ensue. Children and teens who have family meals with their parents consume greater amounts of calcium, iron, potassium, zinc, folate, fiber, and vitamins B-6, B-12, C and E. They consume less fat, including saturated and trans fat. Youth who regularly eat dinner with their parents are more likely to consume breakfast, whether or not adults are present. Most studies have found that children who often eat together with their families are less likely to be obese. Beyond nutritional benefits, children and teens who eat together with their families are more likely to get better grades in school, have a broader vocabulary, use controlled substances less (alcohol, tobacco, drugs, and marijuana), be less depressed, and contribute more to their community and society.

The Healthy Meals Resource System tab of The United States Department of Agriculture's website contains a link to an "Eat Better, Eat Together" leader's guide (from Washington State University). This guide provides models for group lessons, activities, and materials to help promote family meal time. It also provides recommendations for eating together. <https://healthymeals.fns.usda.gov/features-month/october/eat-better-eat-together-month>. See also, <http://kidshealth.org/en/parents/family-meals.html>. The guide lists the groups lessons' goal as follows:

"Goal: The Eat Together, Eat Better (ETEB) lessons support nutrition, parent, and youth educators in teaching the importance of family meals in "setting roots for a life time." Through three related themes—Cook Together, Talk Together, and Celebrate Together—participants will understand benefits of family meals, build skills to support family meals, and gain insight on how to incorporate family meals into their routine." <https://s3.wp.wsu.edu/uploads/sites/414/2015/01/ETEBLeaderGuide.pdf#Page=34>

The leader's guide additionally provides ideas on how to promote the "Eat Together, Eat Better" initiative in one's community. It identifies potential advertising venues such as: "shopping malls, supermarkets posters • community centers bulletin boards • libraries • recreational events • community and youth organizations • health fairs, hospitals, HMO's • insurance companies • school lunch menus • Faith-based organizations • PTA newsletters • daycare center newsletters • community events calendars in the newspaper or on the radio • service club newsletters and bulletins • school nurses • social media channels organization website, Facebook, or Twitter."

<https://s3.wp.wsu.edu/uploads/sites/414/2015/01/ETEBLeaderGuide.pdf#Page=34>

**October 4, 2017 was Walk to School Day:** International Walk to School Day is a global event that involves communities from more than 40 countries walking and biking to school on the same day. It began in 1997 as a one-day event. Over time, this event has become part of a movement for year-round safe routes to school and a celebration – with record breaking participation – each October. Today, thousands of schools across America – from all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico – participate every October. This year, there were 5375 schools registered nationwide to participate in Walk to School Day. The following schools registered from Suffolk County: Academy Street Elementary School, from Bayport; Cherry Avenue Elementary School, from West Sayville; Oquenock Elementary School, from West Islip; Paul J. Bellew Elementary School, from West Islip; South Bay School, from West Babylon; Tremont Elementary School, from Medford; Westhampton Beach Elementary School, from Westhampton Beach; and Wood Park School, from Commack.

<http://www.walkbiketoschool.org/registration/whoswalking.php?sid=NY&cntyid=SUFFOLK%20COUNTRY>

Walk to School Day for 2018 will be October 10<sup>th</sup>, and Walk to School Day for 2019 will be October 2<sup>nd</sup>. <http://www.walkbiketoschool.org/learn-more/about-the-events/about-walk-to-school-day/>

**October 9-13, 2017 was National School Lunch Week:** President John F. Kennedy created National School Lunch Week (NSLW) in 1962. During this annual weeklong celebration, School Nutrition Association members and students around the country celebrate in their cafeterias with decorations, special menus, events, and more. This year's theme for National School Lunch Week was, "School

Lunch: Recipes for Success”. Districts and cafeterias that recognize National School Lunch Week helps them to increase student participation, and also spreads the message to parents that the cafeteria is serving healthy, delicious lunches at school. <https://schoolnutrition.org/Meetings/Events/NSLW/2017/About/>

Many parents are unaware of the quality of lunches that are being served in their children’s schools. School meals are healthy meals that are required to meet the Dietary Guidelines for Americans. To receive federal reimbursements, school meal programs must offer “reimbursable” meals that meet strict federal nutrition standards. These standards require schools to offer students the right balance of fruits, vegetables, low-fat or fat-free milk, whole grains and lean protein with every meal.

Similarly, many parents are unaware of The Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010. This statute required the U.S. Department of Agriculture to update school nutrition standards for the first time in 15 years. The new regulations, effective beginning in 2012, require cafeterias to offer more fruit, vegetables and whole grains and limit sodium, calories and unhealthy fat in every school meal.

**Smart Snacks in School Federal Rules:** Additionally, many parents are unfamiliar with the “Smart Snacks in School” rules that were implemented to go along with the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act (HHFKA). Across the U.S., any school that accepts federal funding for free or reduced lunches under the National School Lunch Program must comply with the rules, unless its state approves exemptions. To ensure all foods and beverages sold in school during the school day are healthy choices, HHFKA also required the USDA to create nutrition standards for foods and beverages sold in competition to reimbursable meals. These “competitive foods” are sold in vending machines, snack bars and a la carte lines. In June 2013, the USDA issued the “Smart Snacks in School” interim final rule establishing these standards, which took effect on July 1, 2014. The rules do not apply to food and beverages brought from home or sold during non-school hours, weekends or at off-campus events (e.g. concessions during sporting events and school plays). <https://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/FR-2013-06-28/pdf/2013-15249.pdf>

The School Nutrition Association has prepared a “Competitive Foods Fact Sheet” to help parents, as well as school administration and staff better understand the requirements. The link to the fact sheet is as follows: [https://schoolnutrition.org/uploadedFiles/About\\_School\\_Meals/What\\_We\\_Do/Competitive-Foods-Fact-Sheet.pdf](https://schoolnutrition.org/uploadedFiles/About_School_Meals/What_We_Do/Competitive-Foods-Fact-Sheet.pdf) It states:

“Under Smart Snacks in Schools, competitive foods must: • Be a “whole grain-rich” grain product; or • Have as the first ingredient a fruit, a vegetable, a dairy product, or a protein food; or • Be a combination food that contains at least ¼ cup of fruit and/or vegetable; or • Contain 10% of the Daily Value (DV) of one of the nutrients of public health concern in the 2010 Dietary Guidelines for Americans (calcium, potassium, vitamin D, or dietary fiber).

Foods must also meet several nutrient requirements: Calorie limits: Snack items: ≤ 200 calories Entrée items: ≤ 350 calories Sodium limits: Snack items: ≤ 200 mg Entrée items: ≤ 480 mg Fat limits: Total fat: ≤ 35% of calories Saturated fat: < 10% of calories Trans fat: zero grams Sugar limit: ≤ 35% of weight from total sugars in foods

Nutrition Standards for Beverages: All schools may sell: • Plain water (with or without carbonation), no portion limit • Unflavored low-fat milk • Unflavored or flavored fat-free milk and milk alternatives (e.g. soy milk, lactose-free milk) • 100% fruit or vegetable juice and • 100% fruit or vegetable juice diluted with water (with or without carbonation), and no added sweeteners.

Elementary schools may sell up to 8-ounce portions, middle/high schools up to 12-ounces of milk and juice.

High schools may sell additional “no calorie” and “lower calorie” beverage options, including caffeinated beverages. Offerings may include no more than 20-ounce portions of calorie-free, flavored water (with or

without carbonation) and other flavored and/or carbonated beverages that contain < 5 calories per 8 fluid ounces or ≤ 10 calories per 20 fluid ounces. High schools may also offer no more than 12-ounce portions of beverages with ≤ 40 calories per 8 ounces, or ≤ 60 calories per 12 ounces.

Fundraisers: States may establish exemptions for items sold at infrequent fundraisers or bake sales.

Local Flexibility: States and/or local schools have the flexibility to maintain or establish their own more stringent standards for competitive foods, as long as they meet the minimum federal standards.”

See also,

<https://www.schoolhealthny.com/site/default.aspx?PageType=3&ModuleInstanceID=223&ViewID=7b97f7ed-8e5e-4120-848f-a8b4987d588f&RenderLoc=0&FlexDataID=266&PageID=142> and <http://www.nyschoolnutrition.org/regulations>

**New York and the Smart Snacks in School Rules:** A comparison of New York’s state policy with USDA’s nutrition standards is here:

[http://www.pewtrusts.org/~media/assets/2015/01/state-fact-sheets/kshf\\_appendix\\_newyork\\_v4.pdf?la=en](http://www.pewtrusts.org/~media/assets/2015/01/state-fact-sheets/kshf_appendix_newyork_v4.pdf?la=en)

It is important to point out how New York’s policy affects PTAs and fundraisers involving the sale of non-compliant food or snacks during the school day. New York State has decided *not* to allow a minimum/maximum number of PTA or other group fundraisers during the year. Some states have allowed exemptions to the rule and have allowed a maximum number of fundraisers involving the sale of non-compliant snacks during the school day per year. For example, Tennessee and Georgia allow 30 fundraisers per year of these banned snacks; Idaho granted 10 per year. New York does not allow any. Fundraisers involving candy, baked goods, pizza, etc. that do not adhere to the guidelines can ONLY be sold after school hours (which is defined as after 30 minutes following the end of the school day). An excellent article which provides a clear explanation of this rule is here:

<http://www.nyssba.org/news/2014/08/28/on-board-online-september-1-2014/contraband-cupcakes-usda-s-new-rules-for-school-food/> See also,

[http://www.syracuse.com/news/index.ssf/2014/11/new\\_ban\\_on\\_selling\\_snacks\\_in\\_ny\\_schools\\_has\\_student\\_clubs\\_struggling\\_to\\_raise\\_mo.html](http://www.syracuse.com/news/index.ssf/2014/11/new_ban_on_selling_snacks_in_ny_schools_has_student_clubs_struggling_to_raise_mo.html)