

## **CASE STUDY**

### **Santa Monica-Malibu**

#### **Movers and Shakers**

The initial impetus for this project came from Bob Gottlieb, a parent at one of the schools in the Santa Monica-Malibu Unified School District (SMMUSD). He approached Rodney Taylor, the School Food Service Director, about implementing a salad bar, and initially received a lukewarm reception. However, Mr. Taylor was open to trying a pilot project as long as Mr. Gottlieb was willing to do most of the organizational work. As a university professor, Mr. Gottlieb was able to incorporate students into the project, as well as write grant proposals to hire full-time staff.

#### **Project Description**

The Farm to School Project encompasses all of the 15 schools in the SMMUSD district, including elementary, junior high and high schools. Each school has a Farmers' Market Salad Bar which features produce that consists entirely of farm products that are purchased at local farmers' markets. The salad bar also contains protein, grain, and dairy products. Because of the year-round growing season, and year-round farmers' markets, the project is able to always include regionally grown produce. While the project began in one school, within a four year period the Farmers' Market Salad Bar was instituted on a district wide basis. The children have the daily choice of the salad bar or the hot meal.

#### **Other Components**

Each of the schools in the district also has a school garden that is maintained by teachers or parent volunteers. A child nutritionist was hired on a temporary basis to teach nutrition education, including a class on salad bar etiquette and an introduction of the items found at the salad bar. A cooking cart is also used for classroom demonstrations.

Another component of the project is field trips to both farms and the farmers' markets. Teachers sign up their classes for farm field trips and the Salad Bar Coordinator arranges tours of the farmers' markets. The latter includes a talk by the Market Manager about the different products at the market accompanied by hands-on experience with the products, and of course, an opportunity to sample them.

#### **Funding**

During the first year, funding was provided by the California Endowment to UCLA/Occidental College through a grant directed by Mr. Gottlieb. In the next year, the district took on the staffing of the project and obtained funding from a Department of Health Services Nutrition Network grant. However, only six schools in the district qualified for this grant, due to the requirement that a specific number of children be eligible for free or reduced meal pricing. At the other schools, the PTA donated \$5,000 - for each school - to get the program up and going. The Santa Monica Farmers' Market also donates \$10,000 per year to the Farm to School project. Funds from ala carte sales also help to support the Farmers' Market Salad Bar.

**Labor**

In the first year, labor was provided primarily by UCLA/Occidental College staff and parent volunteers. However, the school labor unions do not allow parent volunteer labor, and eventually, a part-time person was hired at each school to help with the salad bar preparation, serving and clean-up. There is also a Salad Bar Coordinator who oversees the entire program.

**Farmers/Crops**

There are two tremendously successful year-round farmers' markets within a mile of the SMMUSD central office. Twice a week, on Wednesdays and Saturdays, the Salad Bar Coordinator visits the markets to purchase the produce. Some of the products purchased seasonally include: strawberries, apples, melons, cherries, lettuce, carrots, celery, tomatoes, citrus, raisins, peppers, broccoli, cauliflower, potatoes, and peaches. Over the school year, about 20 farmers will provide crops for the salad bar, and the district will spend a total of approximately \$100,000 on produce from the farmers' market.

**Product Delivery**

The SMMUSD has its own truck to transport the produce. The district purchased the truck prior to the implementation of the Farmers' Market Salad Bar. The produce is brought directly from the farmers' market to the central kitchen where one driver delivers produce to the Santa Monica schools and another driver transports the produce to the schools in Malibu. This is done twice weekly.

**Price**

As the farmers are already making the trip to the farmers' market, and do not have additional delivery costs to the schools, they are able to sell at wholesale instead of retail prices. In the beginning of the project, some farmers sold below wholesale because they believed in the idea of kids eating great produce. With the Farmers' Market Salad Bar now in all 15 schools, the prices are generally comparable to wholesale.

**School Food Service Support**

Initially, support from school food service folks was slow in coming. The real change occurred when the staff saw children choosing the salad bar for lunch, and eating what was on their plate! There is now overwhelming support for the project, and Rodney Taylor has on his business card, "Home of the Farmers' Market Salad Bar".

**Kitchen Facilities**

Each of the schools has their own facilities for food preparation. The actual salad bars were purchased before the farmers' market component was added.

**Sustainability**

After four years in operation, the Farmers' Market Salad Bar is able to operate without grant funding. However, some of the other project components, such as the nutrition education, can only be done if additional funding is obtained. The SMMUSD has found that costs spread out over 15 schools make it a much more viable program than when it operated in only 2 or 3 locations.

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