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## CARVER PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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### FOOD SERVICES IN CARVER WIN NATIONAL USDA AWARD

The United State Department of Agriculture recently awarded the Carver Public Schools Food Service Program with a National Healthy Meals Recognition prize for “Trailblazing Innovative Improvements to make School Meals Healthier!” Cynthia Long, Deputy Under Secretary of USDA, Food, Nutrition, and Consumer Services sent a letter to our district to acknowledge the incredible work our food service team has done to ensure that all students receive healthy meals. The award recognizes Carver for our implementation of farm to table ingredients and cooking meals from scratch in our kitchens! The USDA honored Food Service Director, Theresa Vernazzaro as well as school kitchen managers Holly Hoffman and Rosanne Carvalho at their national summit in Las Vegas from October 21 – 23. Carver Public Schools is only one of 39 districts in the country to receive an award this year!

Mrs. Vernazzaro has the impact of nutrition on learning as a cornerstone of the goals of the department, noting that “nourished children have better attendance, exhibit fewer behavior issues, and are more engaged, contributing to better grades and test scores.”

The goals of the Carver Public Schools Food Service Department include replacing healthy food with real ingredients and lower sodium intake and growing its own lettuce within the 10 hydroponic units in house, both of which are already being done. Future goals include planting an on site apple orchard and have also recently applied for a grant to have a beehive at the Middle High school which would work in coordination with the Environmental and Agricultural pathway curriculum.

In fact, the Food Services Department already partners with several academic departments including the Culinary Pathway who helped to construct a life size gingerbread house last holiday season and works with the Grade 5 science classes at Carver Elementary and the Environmental and Agricultural Science Pathways at the Middle High for project based learning with their hydroponics systems which also feed the endangered Red Bellied Cooter Turtles being raised in the Head Start Program at Carver Middle High. In the future they hope to work with the Middle High Environmental Science Club as well to work on composting food waste.

The influence of change felt in the Food Service Department doesn't stop there as under the leadership of Mrs. Vernazzaro, Carver Schools led innovation as well as encouraging students to try new foods on “Try It Tuesdays” at Carver Elementary which gives an opportunity for students to try new foods, Meals offer so far have included: kelp meatballs in partnership with North Coast Seafoods out of Maine, make your own hummus, made in house and served bento box style, and shrimp scampi.

The Carver Public Schools are proud and grateful to have a food services department who is committed to the wellbeing of the community of Carver. The current staff has 107 years of experience in Carver Schools among 18 personnel who served over 216,000 meals last year. This award and national recognition is well deserved.

*photos courtesy of Carver Public Schools*



*Life-Size Gingerbread House constructed in the Main Lobby of Carver Middle High School*



*Harvesting in the Hydroponic Greenhouses with Grade 5 students*



*Try it Tuesday with North Coast Seafoods' Kelp Meatballs*