

A laugh at lunchtime

New Haven Register
May 18, 2010



Peter Hvizdak/Register

Audrey Rowe, U.S. Department of Agriculture food and nutrition service deputy administrator for Special Nutrition Programs, left, state Rep. Pat Dillon, center, and U.S. Rep. Rosa DeLauro, D-3, look at a bulletin board posted with student drawings on eating healthful foods during Rowe's visit Monday to the Barnard Environmental Studies Magnet School in New Haven. Rowe came to the school to observe the lunch program and to discuss the Child Nutrition Act.

Officials visit city school to promote Child Nutrition Act



By Pamela McLoughlin
Register Staff

pmcloughlin@newhavenregister.com

NEW HAVEN — Alexa Perez, 11, says she prefers chicken nuggets, but she ate her roasted chicken right down to the bone Monday, as did U.S. Rep. Rosa DeLauro, D-3.

DeLauro was in on the roasted chicken because she joined fifth- and sixth-graders at Barnard Environmental Studies Magnet School for lunch, along with Audrey Rowe, U.S. Department of Agriculture deputy administrator for Special Nutrition Programs

DeLauro, Rowe, who traveled from Washington, D.C., and other federal officials, visited the school to stump for reauthorization of the Child Nutrition Act and its strengthening as part of first lady Michelle Obama's "Let's Move," campaign to stem childhood obesity. The act aims to improve quality of food served in schools by decreasing sodium, fat and other unhealthful components, and to increase access to lunch

programs for children who qualify, but may not receive meals because of cumbersome applications. The act has to be reauthorized every five years.

New Haven has a growing reputation as a leader in the campaign to serve healthful lunches, and Tim Cipriano, executive director of food services, is leading the charge. Cipriano has done away with processed chicken nuggets, serves real mashed potatoes, real sweet potatoes and as many fresh fruits and vegetables as possible.

"The president is leading the way," with his goal of providing an additional \$1 billion in funding, Cipriano said. "We're trying to teach kids about real food."

And it doesn't get any more real than Monday's menu: roasted chicken breasts and wings, Spanish rice, tossed salad and an apple.

Sixth-grader Enasha McCrea, 11, who along with her friends sat with DeLauro, admits she likes nuggets, but the real stuff at the school is good, too.

"It's not nasty, it's real good food," she

said, invoking an adjective many have used to describe school lunch food through the years.

Following lunch, DeLauro, Rowe and other officials were part of a roundtable discussion with many agencies and state education representatives charged with feeding children.

DeLauro said, "New Haven is leading the movement. We're changing the nature of what is served." She said the act is also about keeping kids from going hungry because millions for free lunches go unused every year because kids who are eligible aren't signed up for free lunches.

Rowe, who travels the country looking at lunch programs, said elementary and middle schools are a good place to begin changing eating styles because they're still open to trying new things. The trick with high schoolers, she said, is to serve nutritious food in a cool way.

DeLauro said kids have more choices than ever in foods these days and marveled at how many kids say kiwi is their favorite fruit.