

PRESS RELEASE:

Independent school shares data from a self-managed school food program

When Nardin Academy in Buffalo, NY brought their school food operation in-house they uncovered community partnerships, environmental commitments, and an alternative revenue stream in addition to delicious, made from scratch foods.

Chicago, IL (PRWEB) October 27th, 2014 - During the 2013-2014 school year, Nardin Academy brought their foodservice operation in-house. The program was built using a sustainability strategy that the school created with the consultancy Beyond Green: Sustainable Food Partners.

The program at Nardin launched in September of 2013. The strategy will continue to be rolled out over the next four years. Data collected during year one of Sustainable Nardin is being released to show how independent schools can incorporate sustainable practices into a self-managed foodservice operation and consider alternative revenue strategies.

“We have been so pleased to offer our students fresh food that is scratch-cooked; good nutrition that fuels their bodies for their continued energy and focus throughout the day. Having the students understand the program and participate in a meaningful way provides them with learning that they can apply throughout their lives,” says Leslie Johnson, VP of Finance and Operations for Nardin Academy.

Nardin purchased reusable plates, cups, and utensils that were paid for, on average, after 58 uses in comparison to spend on disposables. The school set up a waste tracking system for recycling, compost, and landfill waste. Nardin diverted 86% of its cafeteria waste during the school year. Staff continues to measure waste streams daily and tracks data for benchmarking future reduction goals.

The school found that reducing waste and eliminating kitchen inefficiencies allowed for the purchase of higher quality food and green products.

“When I did an initial assessment in 2013, I found that over 80% of the foods at Nardin were processed. This is typical of what I see in schools across America. They operate on abundant variety, waste, and packaged foods with little culinary skill in the kitchen,” says Greg Christian, Founder of Beyond Green.

Student tastings and surveys helped craft a scratch-cooked menu that brought more fresh food and flavors into the cafeteria, and Beyond Green helped hire a team that could cook from raw ingredients. The school went from an operation that bought over 80% processed foods with half of sales coming from snacks and beverages to an entirely made from scratch menu with 74% of sales coming from well-balanced entrées.

“Most schools that I evaluate are selling about 50% processed, junk foods. Snacks and sugary beverages are a known moneymaker for schools, but Nardin sold 25% less junk and was still able to earn revenue on the program which now supports other sustainable activities,” says Christian.

Sales were double first year projections, but the school found the program had a community impact too. Six guest chefs from local restaurants cooked in support of the program. 7th grade math classes worked with waste data. The chef visited high school classes to discuss nutrition, and students were surveyed on menu offerings. Conducting focus groups was also important for gathering parent feedback, which was largely enthusiastic.

“Each year Nardin has an annual auction event to raise money for the school. One segment of the event is called “Raise Your Paddle” which supports a chosen initiative. Last year it was the Sustainable Nardin project, focusing on kitchen equipment. We raised more money than any other initiative in the history of the auction,” says Johnson.

With a successful first year and additional funding, the Nardin Academy kitchen was renovated this past summer. They purchased a blast chiller for preparing fresh produce, which is obtained in season, frozen onsite, and used in the winter. A Learning Garden was also awarded through a grant the school received from the Captain Planet Foundation.

In year two of the new self-managed program, Nardin Academy looks forward to integrating the garden and cafeteria into more curriculum and community projects, using food grown from the garden in the dining hall, and purchasing more local foods.

About:

Beyond Green is a foodservice consulting firm helping clients become more sustainable and health conscious in their operations. They run a local foodservice company in Chicago and offer a variety of educational programs. Greg Christian is a sustainability expert, speaker, and curriculum writer. Beyond Green is committed to changing the food system in America through a variety of holistic, customized service areas. They are a certified B Corporation.

Nardin Academy is a 155-year-old private, independent Catholic school located in Buffalo, New York. They have a Montessori program, a co-ed elementary school, and a high school for young women.

Additional data for Sustainable Nardin can be found here.