

Two Angry Moms Make a Difference

I had to chuckle last week when one of my staff looked at my schedule on the computer and asked who were the two angry moms I was meeting with on April 9! The two angry moms are Amy and Susan. Amy had been packing her kids lunches for years and trying to get her community to pay attention to what kids are eating in school. Susan had been trying for years to work with her district on improving school food and had earned a reputation as a "rabble-rouser". She had even been banned from her children's school cafeteria. Both knew that good nutrition was vital for their children's health and also affected their ability to learn. Both were ready to battle.

As an award-winning documentary filmmaker, Amy followed Susan's crusade over the course of a school year. They looked at the role of the federal government, corporate interest, schools, and parents in the feeding of school kids. Fortunately, for the rest of us, the moms show not only what is wrong with school food; the film also offers strategies for overcoming roadblocks and getting real food into school cafeterias.

At the local level, the Southeastern District Health Department is pleased to announce a screening of *Two Angry Moms*. The documentary will be shown during ISU's week-long Spring Fest on Wednesday, April 9th 2008, at 7:00 p.m. at the Bengal Theatre in the Student Union Building at Idaho State University. When Holly Husted from the health department contacted me about being a speaker at the event, I was excited but also apprehensive. I'm good friends with the school district dietitian, Dawn Stone, R.D., and I didn't want the event to turn into a hostile bashing of our local school lunches. I've long joked with Dawn that I wouldn't trade jobs with her for a million bucks (okay, maybe a million!), because of the challenges she faces as the school dietitian. Serving hundreds of kids with varying tastes, keeping the food warm and fresh during transport from a central kitchen, following government guidelines, and budget constraints, and more makes her job challenging to say the least. On the positive side, Dawn has been able to implement several healthy programs including the Healthy Choice line which offers unlimited fruits and veggies. She also has recently started visiting the schools, bringing fruits and veggies for the kids to try. On a recent visit to some 1st grade classrooms, she took kiwi, avocado, and red peppers. Sadly, she reported, many of the kids had no idea what the avocados and peppers were as they had never been introduced to them at home. Obviously the nutrition problem is complicated and multi-faceted.

But there is good news on the horizon. The *Two Angry Moms* documentary examines a grass-roots movement to establish school food programs that are aimed at improving children's health. This is a growing movement that has already touched many parents, schools, and kids across the nation. At the screening, Jessica McAleese and I will be talking about community health and nutrition. Jessica was co-author on an April, 2007 *Journal of the American Dietetic Association* paper with Dr. Linda Rankin (ISU) that cited many studies that demonstrate: 1) eating patterns are developed at an early age and can be traced into and through adulthood; 2) proper adolescent nutrition can reduce

overweight and obesity; 3) school-based programs represent an important venue for nutrition behavior; and 4) schoolyard gardens are emerging as health education tools in academic settings. Last fall, I received a USDA Team Nutrition Grant and part of the funding is to be used to start a school-yard garden this spring. The garden will be at the lower campus of Grace Lutheran School (on Pershing Ave.,) but the plan is to divide the land into plots that can be used by other schools in the Pocatello/Chubbuck area. Ultimately, the fruits and veggies will be consumed by students in our local community!

Please join us on April 9th for an exciting evening and come and learn what *you* can do to better our children's health. It's not just a movie, it's a movement.

For more information about the movie go the *Two Angry Moms* website at www.angrymoms.org