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## **PRESS RELEASE**

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### **Local Nonprofit Rolls-Out Ground-Breaking, and Cost-Effective School Food Menu**

#### ***-All-Natural, Homemade Foods to Benefit Thousands of San Diego Children-***

**San Diego** -- Neighborhood House Association (NHA)'s Head Start program made history with the start of the new school year by rolling out a new food menu that will have special significance to the health of the children enrolled in its child-development program. On September 15, 2008, the first day of school for Head Start, NHA introduced its healthy menu throughout the county and is serving nearly 10,000 healthier meals a day. The new menu will include organic and nutrient-dense foods that are environmentally more sustainable than the previous school menu. The innovative healthy menu is unique to the NHA Head Start program and could significantly impact child nutrition menus throughout the country.

"The goal is to provide the highest quality food with the most available nutrients so that our Head Start children can learn and develop to their highest potential," said NHA President and CEO Rudolph A. Johnson, III. "Besides the high-quality nutritional value of this new menu, each child is also being exposed to a variety of culturally-diverse foods in an effort to further enhance the educational process."

Deli meats are out of the new menu. So are breaded, frozen fish sticks, hamburger buns, cinnamon muffins, waffles and a wide host of canned and processed foods. In are fresh salmon, homemade hummus, healthy whole grain bagels and rolls, as well as fresh fruits and vegetables and many organic ingredients.

"The key to us being able to offer natural and organic products is balancing," says NHA Director of Nutrition Services Kristine Smith, R.D. "We balanced our new menu with more affordable recipes and better ingredients. Legumes, lentils, rice and pasta are very affordable and can be used as the base of many recipes. Making food from scratch also saves money and allows us to monitor the nutrient value since we know what is contained in the product."

The new menu represents a unique approach in child nutrition services that varies greatly from the traditional model of purchasing processed foods. The new menu focuses on the use of natural, unprocessed health foods and provides a better nutrient content. To support this new model, NHA kitchen staff has modified its culinary skills to adapt to a more “homestyle” approach while continuing production in an efficient and timely manner.

“Children attending Head Start are developing at one of the most critical times of their lives,” said Johnson. “NHA is committed to excellence and embracing the challenge of developing innovative programs that assure future generations the opportunity to succeed. Providing outstanding nutritional support for families is important and it is imperative that we ensure the nutritional quality of the food we serve is the highest possible.”

As the new menu grows and progresses, NHA plans to incorporate more organic foods and foods bought from local farmers’ markets into the childrens’ diet.

“Organic foods help preserve our environment,” said Smith. The use of organic and health conscious ingredients is better for our children’s bodies and better for the planet they’ll inherit.”

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The Neighborhood House Association (NHA) is San Diego County’s largest multi-purpose human services agency. NHA helps thousands of individuals and families improve their quality of life by providing vital social services including employment, healthcare, child, family and senior services. For more information, visit [www.neighborhoodhouse.org](http://www.neighborhoodhouse.org).