

Chairperson
Judith A. Wenker



President and CEO
Rudolph A. Johnson, III

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Date: January 4, 2015

Contact: Christina Smith
(O): (858) 715-2642 ext. 127
(C): (858) 520-0529

MEDIA RELEASE

University Study Proves NHA Made-From-Scratch Meals Beneficial to Children's Health

The Neighborhood House Association (NHA) and California State University Long Beach (CSULB) have conducted a study to validate the nutritional quality of NHA's preschool menu. Research shows that made-from-scratch meals provided by NHA's Nutrition Services program offered increased nutrients and vegetable offerings that are beneficial to childhood development. These findings are significant because they reflect the improvement of made-from-scratch menus over traditional "heat-and-serve" options. The report was published in the December 2015 issue of *ICAN: Infant, Child, & Adolescent Nutrition*, a bi-monthly medical journal dedicated to pediatric nutrition.

Kristine Smith, the Director of Nutrition Services at NHA, was the catalyst for the overhaul of NHA's Head Start menu. From traditional heat-and-serve, to the nutrient-dense, made-from-scratch options now offered to preschoolers by NHA, Smith has transformed NHA's menu and dispelled the myth that kids do not like healthy food.

"We want to give the kids our best. That's why we use fresh, organic, locally-produced ingredients. I am proud of the food we serve because I know the impact healthy eating has on children and families. NHA's goal is that by introducing children to healthy foods early, it will influence them to continue to make healthy choices as they grow," Smith said.

According to the report, preschool is the perfect place for young children to learn healthy eating habits.

"Child care centers are well situated to play a key role in exposing children to a variety of healthy foods and flavors, potentially affecting food preferences, consumption patterns, and disease risk later in life," the report says.

Bolstered by active parent involvement and a comprehensive education program, NHA proudly boasts a 96% meal satisfaction rating among children. NHA serves 6,000 meals daily. In 2012, NHA was recognized by First Lady Michelle Obama's *Let's Move!* Campaign for fighting for promoting children's health and preventing childhood obesity. NHA's Nutrition service program also partners with Farm to Preschool to teach children and parents about local produce and the benefits of eating healthy food.

“NHA is proud to lead the way in developing nutritious, balanced menus for preschool children,” said Smith. “Because preschool is such a critical developmental period, the industry is looking to increase child care nutrition standards. Some of the changes being proposed have already been implemented here at NHA.”

The report findings are evidence that when it comes to improving the nutritional value of preschools meals, NHA’s made-from-scratch menu is a great model to follow.

“Child care centers such as those served by NHA provide an excellent example of effort to align menus with Dietary Guidelines by offering a variety of fruits and vegetables, emphasizing whole grains, limiting processed foods, and increasing fresh foods, partially achieved by using snacks as minimeals with a variety of healthy foods,” the report says.

For more information on NHA’s Nutrition Services Program, visit www.neighborhoodhouse.org. To read the full report, click [here](#).

###

About the Neighborhood House Association: *The Neighborhood House Association is one of the largest multi-purpose social service agencies in San Diego, serving thousands of families each year. With 13 programs ranging from early childhood development, behavioral health services, senior services, and more, the Neighborhood House Association is committed to developing confident, self-sufficient, healthy families and communities. To learn more about the Neighborhood House Association, visit www.neighborhoodhouse.org.*