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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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MEDIA RELEASE

Neighborhood House Association Nutrition Services Program Supports New Child and Adult Food Program Standards

As Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) providers across the country begin transitioning to the USDA's updated nutritional standards—the first revision to the meal patterns since the program's inception nearly 50 years ago—Neighborhood House Association (NHA) remains committed to serving healthy, balanced meals to the thousands of children, seniors and veterans each year. Since NHA's Nutrition Services Program overhauled its Head Start menu 10 years ago, the agency has led the way in developing a nutritious preschool menu, and is pleased to see the country moving forward in a positive direction for the health of children.

NHA is known locally and nationally for its innovative made-from-scratch menu that is specifically designed to intrigue picky eaters and to help develop their taste preferences toward healthy foods. Kristine Smith, Registered Dietitian and Senior Director of NHA's Nutrition Services program, was the catalyst for the 2008 overhaul of NHA's Head Start menu. From traditional heat-and-serve meals, to the nutrient-dense, made-from-scratch options now offered to preschoolers by NHA, Smith has transformed the agency's menu and dispelled the myth that kids do not like healthy food.

"I am proud of the food we serve because I know the impact healthy eating has on children and families. NHA's goal is to introduce children to healthy foods early so that they continue to make healthy choices as they grow," Smith said.

Rudolph A. Johnson, III, NHA's President and CEO, has been a key promoter and supporter of the work of Smith and her team. Johnson is committed to excellence in every area of the agency, and that includes the 6,000 meals that are prepared by NHA's Nutrition Services program each day.

"NHA is proud to lead the way in developing nutritious, balanced menus for preschool children. Parents expect nothing less than excellence from us, and we want to give the kids our best. That's why we use fresh, organic, locally-produced ingredients," Johnson said.

The Kids' Safe and Healthful Foods Project, a collaboration between The Pew Charitable Trusts and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, published a study in July that assessed the likely effects of USDA's updated nutrition standards for CACFP providers. NHA was highlighted for its

supportive approach towards teaching preschool-aged Head Start children about healthy eating and offering a menu that is in many ways, already supporting the new CACFP meal pattern guidelines.

The study found:

- The nutritional quality of CACFP-funded meals and snacks should improve from updated standards, increasing children's intake of whole grains and vegetables, decreasing their consumption of grain-based desserts, and having a positive overall impact on their health.
- Nutrition education, training, and technical assistance, along with increased service of nutrient dense meals and snacks at early care and education settings, may positively affect providers', parents' and children's attitudes toward healthy foods.
- All children under the care of a provider following CACFP standards, even those whose meals may not be eligible for reimbursement, would probably benefit from the nutritional updates.

The project recommends that providers aim to incorporate USDA's best practices into their menus and that Congress, the USDA, state agencies, providers, and sponsors adopt policies and practices to improve the nutrition and overall health of CACFP-enrolled children.

"Because preschool is such a critical developmental period, the industry is looking to increase child care nutrition standards. Some of the meal pattern changes have already been implemented here at NHA," Smith said.

Bolstered by active parent involvement and a comprehensive education program, NHA proudly boasts a 96% meal satisfaction rating among children. NHA serves over 1,000,000 meals each year that comply with CACFP. In 2012, NHA was recognized by First Lady Michelle Obama's *Let's Move!* campaign for promoting children's health and preventing childhood obesity. NHA's Nutrition Services program also partners with Farm to Preschool to teach children and parents about local produce and the benefits of eating healthy food.

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

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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 21 programs ranging from early childhood development, behavioral health services, senior services, and more, the Neighborhood House Association is committed to developing healthy and educated communities—where dreams become reality. To learn more about the Neighborhood House Association, visit www.neighborhoodhouse.org.*