

STATE OF NEW YORK
OFFICE OF GENERAL SERVICES
John C. Egan, COMMISSIONER

Brad Maione - Public Information Office
(518) 474-5987
<http://www.ogs.state.ny.us>



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
Friday, November 20, 2009

OGS AND USDA RECOGNIZE SCHOOL LUNCH PROGRAMS FOR EXCELLENCE
Monroe and Nassau County Based Districts Earn Distinction

New York State Office of General Services (OGS) Commissioner John Egan today announced that in association with the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), it has presented two New York State school districts with Best Practices Awards.

The awards, presented to Gates Chili (Monroe County) and Northport-East Northport Union Free School District (UFSD) (Suffolk County), recognize innovative practices and creative use of USDA foods in school lunch programs. The \$5,000 prize awards given to each of the districts will be utilized for school lunch-related purchases.

"It's crucial that we prioritize the health of our children by proactively addressing what we are offering in school lunchrooms," said First Lady Michelle Paige Paterson. "At a time when school dollars are stretched tight, OGS and USDA are helping New York State schools to find creative ways to encourage kids to make healthy choices."

"Just as First Lady Michelle Paige Paterson has made fighting the battle against childhood obesity a priority, OGS is continuing to work with school districts across the state to ensure that children have healthy food choices every day," OGS Commissioner Egan said. "Good nutrition is a cornerstone to learning and we are pleased to work with USDA to provide healthy and delicious foods for 932 school districts statewide."

Mark Johnson, Chief of the USDA's Family Nutrition Programs, said: "The USDA Family Nutrition Programs serve two purposes: they provide support to our farmers and give schools the opportunity to reduce their school lunch costs by using USDA foods at virtually no charge. New York continues to be one of the nation's strongest supporters of these goals. In the end, it is the customer who benefits from these efforts because we have school and state officials who want our children to get the best nutritional value for their dollar."

The Gates Chili Central School District, located in Monroe County, was recognized for creativity stemming from a project with the goal of increasing consumption of healthier alternatives incorporating bean-based recipes.

The district, which serves 4,500 students, developed several new offerings for its menus featuring red, white, and black beans and other USDA commodities. These included: *Cowboy Bean & Corn Chili*, *Chicken Caesar Wrap with Red Pinto Beans*, and *Fiesta Beef & Bean Taco*. Gates Chili is currently sharing these nutritious recipes with other districts throughout the state.

Debbie Beauvais, the Food Service Director of the Gates Chili Central School District said: "Over the 10 years that I have worked in School Food Service, the Office of General Services has always been very supportive of our Child Nutrition Program. Purchasing trends evolve continuously and the Office of General Services must keep pace with these changes. OGS continues to improve the nutritional quality of the products to ensure our students are getting the best food possible. We really appreciate the support we get from OGS with providing healthy meals to our students."

At the Northport-East Northport UFSD, School Lunch Director Andrew Bromm was recognized for his efforts in turning around a struggling lunch program. The district faced many challenges including an \$80,000-a-year deficit, complaints about menus and food quality, and parental concerns focusing on the sale of less desirable snack foods.

The district created a series of recipes that were enhanced by the inclusion of USDA foods. Among its healthy new creations were: *Waldorf Salad with Cranberry Glazed Chicken*, *Confetti Corn Salad*, and *Lemon Glazed Carrots*.

As a result of the project, the financial situation and customer satisfaction improved, this was particularly noteworthy because the district was experiencing a period of declining enrollment. Northport-East Northport UFSD also served over 9,000 more lunches compared to the previous year, and overall participation in its lunch program increased from 31.2 percent to 35.1 percent.

Northport-East Northport UFSD, School Lunch Director Andrew Bromm said: "Our program depends heavily on the Office of General Services and the commodity products that they provide. Some commodities, such as cheese, are key ingredients. Other items, such as chicken fajitas, are highly versatile and allow us to create eclectic recipes and keep our menus interesting. I also appreciate how OGS is such an effective partner for schools. They listen to our concerns and act upon them promptly."

OGS administers the USDA Food Distribution Program in New York State. The OGS Division of Food Distribution & Warehousing receives, warehouses, and distributes government commodity food for use by school districts, food banks, and child and adult care facilities. More than \$91 million worth of food is distributed annually to over 3,500 recipient agencies throughout New York State.

The USDA Food and Consumer Services purchases foods through direct appropriations from Congress. The foods are distributed to each state for use by eligible local outlets, including schools. Participants in these food distribution programs may receive USDA government commodity meats, poultry, vegetables, fruits, grains, and dairy products.

#