



Annual Report

Academic Year 2015-2016

RFKM's Key Accomplishments

RFKM Helps Propel School Food Resolution Through the MCCPTA Delegates Assembly

On March 22, 2016 a resolution that RFKM helped shape and lobby for, asking for profound changes to the MCPS school food, was passed by the Montgomery County Council of PTAs (MCCPTA) Delegates' Assembly. It will now be communicated to the new Superintendent and Board of Education by the MCCPTA leadership. The resolution requests that MCPS

- begin the transition to scratch-cooking in its central facility or in working school kitchens and that the Board of Education conduct a cost and feasibility study on that transition;
- reduce added sugar in school foods to no more than 10% of calories;
- offer only a limited selection of healthier a la carte items in elementary schools;
- remove soda, sugar-sweetened and artificially-sweetened beverages from school vending machines;
- remove all synthetic dyes from school foods; and
- put salad bars in all schools that can accommodate them.

MCPS Eliminates Sale of Products with Artificial Sweeteners During School Day

Thanks to our presence on the Wellness Regulation Revision Work Group during the spring of 2015, when the new

(continued on p. 2)

Letter from the Executive Director

This year's primary accomplishments came in the area of policy and networking. While working on policy may not seem glamorous, it's how you institutionalize change so that you don't have to keep fighting the same battles over and over again. Our primary chance to affect policy came through our participation in the district-wide standing Wellness Committee established thanks to our lobbying. While we were given the mandate to make recommendations for better implementation of the Wellness Regulation, many of our recommendations would, in fact, warrant a change in policy. I'm confident that when the committee meets again in 2016-2017, that the recommendations made for changes in practice last year will be recommended for policy changes this year.



We also created a strong foundation to impact future policies through the passage of the MCCPTA Resolution (see story at left), and had great networking opportunities through participation in the *Eat Well, Be Active* partnership and the Salad Bar Summit, which we sponsored through our coalition, Healthy School Food Maryland. While many of these activities happen under the radar, they are setting the stage for future changes that could have big impacts.

As we approach our fourth year of existence, I can say confidently that RFKM has gone from a ragtag bunch of volunteers to a professional organization with a seat at all the tables that are making decisions on policy and practices around school food in the county. Through the networking opportunities afforded by these committees, as well as the networking that has come from working on statewide legislation, we are well-known across the county and state, and I believe, well-respected as a professional organization that successfully brings about change.

Our membership now stands at over 4300, with parents hailing from 192 of the 203 public schools in the county. We continue to recruit and train parent representatives to individual schools and can count 10 active wellness committees in MCPS schools. As more success stories from schools come online, more parents are inspired to get involved. If you're one of those parents who has not yet gotten involved, you might consider working with RFKM as a school representative for 2016-2017.

I look forward to continuing to work with all of you over the next school year!

Lindsey Parsons

RFKM's Key Accomplishments (continued from p. 1)

Wellness Regulation (JPG-RA) was issued in November of 2015, it included the following language describing permitted a la carte foods: "There can be no added aspartame or acesulfame potassium." Both artificial sweeteners have been shown to cause cancer in animal studies and are on the *Avoid* list produced by Center for Science in the Public Interest. This effectively ends school day sales of G2, a lower calorie Gatorade product and Fruit Wave H2O, a sweetened, flavored water. The committee was made up almost entirely of MCPS employees with the only occasional participation of another parent, student or other non-profit representative. In addition, the current owner of the vending contract with MCPS and co-owner of a company that produces Fruit Wave H2O (whose sale was forbidden under the prior policy) was allowed to attend meetings and vote on the final recommendations, although he was not included on the invitation list from Larry Bowers, MCPS' Chief Operating Officer (COO) at the time. Given the composition of the committee and the agenda, which was tightly controlled by the Division of Food and Nutrition Services, this was a significant victory in quiet diplomacy and heroic efforts to share scientific information in a structure that allowed very little information sharing and debate amongst the committee members as a whole.



MCPS Forms Wellness Committee

Thanks to lobbying efforts by RFKM, MCPS formed a standing Wellness Committee that better represents the stakeholders in school food in winter of 2015. After serving on the Wellness Regulation Revision Work Group during spring 2015, RFKM lobbied MCPS COO Andrew Zuckerman to establish a standing wellness committee facilitated and led by non-interested parties above the chain of command of the Division of Food and Nutrition Services, with 50% non-MCPS employees and 25% parents as invited members. We were very pleased that a committee that met these requirements was formed. The committee was given the jurisdiction to make recommendations on the implementation of the current Wellness Policy and Regulation in the areas of physical education, physical activity, nutrition education, school food and mental health. After presentations by MCPS employees from each involved division, sharing of articles and information and discussion amongst committee members, recommendations were made and voted on each area. We are still awaiting the final recommendations that will be issued from the 2015-2016 committee meetings. Unfortunately, the committee's leaders indicated that they would only be passing on two of the recommendations made by the committee members in each of those areas, due to lack of capacity in the units tasked with implementing them. Despite that drawback, we're confident that the committee's work will make a positive impact on the health and wellness of MCPS students.



RFKM Helps Resurrect MCCPTA Health and Safety Committee

Last academic year, the MCCPTA Health and Safety Committee stopped meeting after its latest leader's child graduated from high school. RFKM's Executive Director, Lindsey Parsons, helped restart the committee by becoming a delegate to the MCCPTA for her child's school and bringing together parents interested in health and safety issues. The committee elected a very competent and supportive Chair, Stefania Clerici, as well as a new Chair for the Subcommittee on School Nutrition - Lisa Mandell, RFKM's parent representative to Bradley Hill ES and an RFKM Advisory Board Member during academic year 2015-2016. By becoming a delegate, Lindsey gained access to the Health and Safety committee and the Delegate's listserv and a better understanding of MCCPTA processes in anticipation of wanting to spearhead a resolution on school food. The committee and its leadership were essential in helping write and support the resolution on school food that was passed in March of 2016.

RFKM's Co-Founder Steps Down

This year, we were sad to lose the daily presence of our co-founder and Director, Karen Devitt. In August 2015, Karen lost her husband in a tragic accident. As a result, Karen stepped down from her role as Director of RFKM at the end of October. Karen will be irreplaceable to RFKM in her role as an effective and passionate advocate for healthier food for our children. We will greatly miss Karen's daily presence in our work. Karen has stayed on, however, as an Advisor to the organization. Thank you Karen for your vision and work on behalf of our kids. RFKM would not exist with you!



Top Chef Celebrities Support Healthier School Foods



RFKM Executive Director Lindsey Parsons joined Top Chef host Padma Lakshmi (left) and Top Chef Judge Tom Colicchio (right) at an event to support efforts to reauthorize the Child Nutrition Act and keep school food standards strong. Both Top Chef celebrities affirmed their support of our local work for healthier school food. The event was sponsored by the NANA Coalition



and held at the Senate.

RFKM Partners with FarmRai\$er

Last winter, RFKM announced its partnership with FarmRai\$er, a healthy new way to raise funds for PTAs, clubs, teams and other organizations. Participating organizations choose from a selection of local farm products to sell, then participating kids sell the products via a custom online market to family and friends. Each group keeps over 50% of total sales (90% of profits). Pickup takes place at the school or other chosen location. In 2015-2016, two MCPS elementary school PTAs, Somerset and Fields Road, held successful FarmRai\$ers.

5 for 5 Challenge



Thirty one kids participated in the *5 for 5 Challenge* last fall and ate tons of fruits and vegetables over the five days of the Challenge! That was more than double the number who participated last year. We had two schools' PTAs partner with us this fall - Sligo Creek Elementary School and North Chevy Chase Elementary School. Partnering PTAs receive half of the profits from the Challenge.

The greatest variety award was given to Nico (right), a Sligo Creek ES student, for eating 42 different fruits and vegetables during the challenge! They included a variety of diverse and exotic items, such as bitter melon, cardoon, lychee and dandelion greens! According to Nico's mom, Jo Rasi, "The *5 for 5 Challenge* became a bit like a family board game, except it lasted all week. We went to different grocery stores looking for new veggies we hadn't had before, we read about veggies, we looked closely at different lettuce leaf varieties, I told the story of my grandmother reminiscing about cadoons, and we enjoyed making dinner plates with different colors." We will conduct the *5 for 5 Challenge* again this fall.



RFKM on WJLA ABC 7



At the beginning of the school year, RFKM Executive Director Lindsey Parsons was interviewed on ABC 7 news to talk about a new online survey showing how MCPS misses the mark in nutrition, and how local schools can raise their grade. The survey, based on over 6,000 public votes, gave MCPS a C+ in the cafeteria, compared to A's and B's in academic and other areas.

RFKM Again Awarded Grant from Mead Family Foundation and Others

We are very grateful to continue to have the support of the Mead Family Foundation, who for the third year in a row, awarded RFKM a grant for general operating support for our organization. Their support has allowed us to continue to have a full-time Executive Director, which has been essential in gaining us a seat at the table for committees that meet during the work day and in handling an increasing workload.

We are also thankful for the continuing support of the Jim and Carol Trawick Foundation in providing us office space for an additional year, to Whole Foods Market, who supported our events with in-kind donations, and to the Whole Kids Foundation, who supported the Salad Bar Summit we hosted on behalf of Healthy School Food Maryland.

Spotlight on Schools

2015-2016 School Food Improvement Award

Last year, both Somerset Elementary School (ES) and East Silver Spring ES were awarded the RFKM School Food Improvement Award for their exemplary efforts in promoting wellness and nutrition. On June 13, 2016, RFKM presented the award to Somerset ES. With the support of Principal Kelly Morris and the PTA, RFKM Representative Kerri Davis started the year by founding a Nutrition and Wellness Committee. The school then hosted a FarmRai\$er in which they raised over \$2,500, some of which went to the school's first-ever wellness week in which banners, contests, and assemblies promoted nutrition, fitness and mindfulness.



The committee also shared RFKM's healthy classroom material with teachers, leading to healthier snacks and rewards in the classroom and limiting birthday celebrations to once per month. Additionally, in cooperation with the cafeteria manager, Somerset ES removed unhealthy a la carte menu items, such as Doritos and Cheetos, and replaced them with healthier options, such as 51% whole grain pita chips, popcorn, hummus, cheese sticks and roasted chickpeas. Also, for the first time, the a la carte menu was published and distributed to parents, making them aware of the school food options.

On June 14, 2016, RFKM presented East Silver Spring ES with the School Nutrition Improvement Award. East Silver Spring ES has made equally commendable efforts to promote health and wellness this year under the leadership of RFKM

Representatives Karen Kali and Maggie Carey, with the support of Principal Adrienne Morrow, Assistant Principal Tara Strain and the PTA. This year, the school held their first annual Wellness Night, which engaged students through smoothie making, Zumba,



mindfulness training and a fruit tasting, as well as provided information on nutrition and wellness through presentations and sample snack packs. Additionally, East Silver Spring ES emphasized the importance of drinking water by providing each student with a free reusable water bottle and requesting a



water bottle filler station near the cafeteria. Finally, the PTA created a list of healthy snack options

that was sent home with kindergarten students to encourage parents to donate these healthy snacks to the classroom. These accomplishments and many more are chronicled in a very impressive blog created by the Wellness Committee.

Westland Middle School Makes the Case for Water Instead of Sugary Beverages

What can you do if your school has vending machines selling unhealthy beverages that you can't get rid of? When Westland MS's Health & Wellness Committee found that 87% of parents were concerned about products sold in vending machines, their PTA supported the purchase of Sugar Shockers posters demonstrating the sugar content of common drinks. Their principal Alison Serino was so supportive that she let them place the posters right next to the machines and even tweeted about it.

 Alison L. Serino @WestlandPrinc 17m
Sugar shocker banners are here! Many thanks to the Parent Wellness Comm and PTA! #healthyoptions #realfood



BCC HS Students Win Awards to Improve Cafeteria

Elena de Toledo (RFKM Student Advisory Board Member) and Helena Hailu won 3 different awards totaling \$1950 to help make the cafeteria at Bethesda Chevy Chase High School more welcoming. Both students testified powerfully before the MCPS Board of Education on February 22 about the racial segregation in the cafeteria and the stigma associated with eating school food.

Healthy School Food Maryland



Healthy School Food Maryland (HSFMD) is a statewide coalition coordinated by RFKM working for whole, real, local and safe foods for children in Maryland's school cafeterias. Five more entities joined our coalition this year: the Maryland Public Health Association; Food and Community Health at the Center for Integrative Medicine at University of Maryland; The Maryland Association of Health, Physical Education, Recreation And Dance; Start School Later and Donté's Boxing Gym. This year, we helped organize and participated in two major events, as well as running a statewide legislative campaign.

Statewide Legislative Campaign

HSFMD introduced two bills in the 2016 Maryland state legislative session. **The Sensible Sugar in Schools Act** (SB 65, HB 528), sponsored by Delegate Eric Ebersole of Baltimore and Howard Counties and Senator Ronald Young of Frederick & Washington Counties, would have required school districts to work toward lowering sugar in school meals based on guidelines set by the American Heart Association. **The School Food Transparency Act** (HB 109), sponsored by Delegate Diana Fennell of Prince George's County, would have required schools to list a la carte items and snack foods on breakfast and lunch menus. HSFMD helped recruit 12 parents from around the state to testify in either written or oral format at the committee hearings in support of the bills.

Salad Bar Summit

HSFMD's Salad Bar Summit held on April 16, 2016 was a huge success with over 70 attendees, including parents, teachers, food service professionals, farmers and students from five Maryland counties, including Montgomery County's Director of the Division of Food and Nutrition Services, Marla Caplon. The keynote speaker, Rodney Taylor, gave a moving talk that both inspired and educated on how putting "Farmer's Market Salad Bars" in elementary schools is feasible, results in greater consumption of fruits and vegetables and actually helps a district's bottom line.



Food Day Symposium at Bowie State University

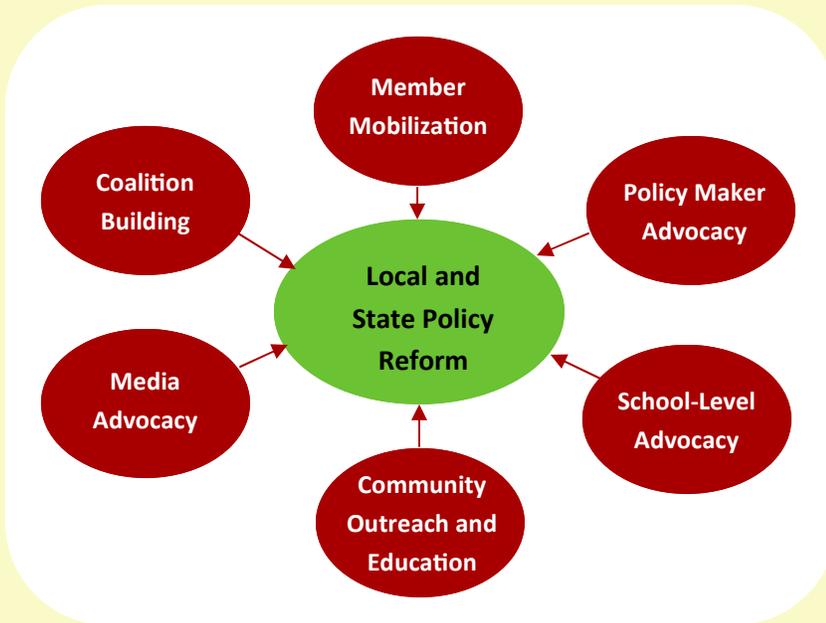
On October 24, 2016 HSFMD celebrated Food Day by helping organize and participating in the 5th Annual Food Day Symposium at Bowie State University: *Promoting Healthy Eating at School for the Management of Childhood Obesity: The Challenge of Processed Menus and Vending Machine Culture.*

Member Priorities 2016

Each year, RFKM polls its members on their top priorities for our advocacy work. This year, 493 of our supporters started and 402 completed the entire survey. Based on their responses, these were the top ten member priorities for calendar year 2016.

1. At the elementary school level, increasing the amount of wholesome food options and reducing the amount of "junk" food options (e.g., burgers, fries, pizza, processed chicken).
2. At the middle and high school level, increasing the amount of wholesome food options and reducing the amount of "junk" food options (e.g., burgers, fries, pizza, processed chicken).
3. Moving from processed, pre-plated and reheated food to food cooked from scratch at the central facility with more prep work done on site at schools with kitchens.
4. Removing or reducing marketing of unhealthy foods in school.
5. A limited set of healthier a la carte items for elementary schools.
6. Removing other remaining chemicals characterized as "avoid" or "caution" by the Center for Science in the Public Interest from school food.
7. A limited set of healthier a la carte items for middle and high schools.
8. Reducing the sugar in all school foods.
9. Offering unlimited fruits and vegetables free to all children who purchase lunch.
10. Putting salad bars in all middle and high schools.

How We Advocate for Nutritious Food in MCPS



Member Mobilization: We grow our membership through reaching out to new parents, teachers and students via school and PTA listservs, social media, back-to-school nights, PTA meetings and other outreach events. Members are polled each year in order to set our school food reform priorities. Members are then mobilized to take action to advocate for better food at their child(ren)’s school(s) and on the district and state level.

Policy Maker Advocacy: We meet with policy makers on a local and state level both individually and in formal settings, such as testifying before the MCPS school board. We also send e-mails and make phone calls to advocate for policy changes.

School-Level Advocacy: We recruit parent representatives at each school in MPCS, conduct trainings for and provide materials to these representatives, and support them in reaching out to other parents to form wellness committees, meet with decision makers and make changes at the local school level.

Community Outreach and Education: We participate in city and school fairs and festivals to reach out to the community for membership building and education. We hold movie screenings, workshops and conferences to educate and inform parents, students and other community members.

Media Advocacy: We send out press releases, call members of the media and respond to media inquiries to keep the public informed about our work.

Coalition Building: We reach out to non-profit organizations, businesses, government officials and school food advocates for ideas and mutual support in our policy and legislative agendas.

Looking Ahead

The RFKM Advisory Board held a strategy retreat in May 2016. In consideration of both our members’ priorities and the MCCPTA Resolution we helped pass, we have decided to focus academic year 2016-2017 on implementing new, successful salad bars and improving existing ones, reducing unhealthy food marketing, increasing scratch cooking and reducing sugar in school foods. We have decided not to pursue statewide legislation, due to our limited resources, but hope to influence school food statewide and in MCPS through our program of School Food Environment Grades for each of the 24 counties in Maryland. The grades will be issued in fall of 2016 and are based on consistent access to potable water; use of local produce and farm-to-school programs; policies prohibiting artificial colors, flavors and other chemicals in school food; access to healthier vending options; existence of and transparency about a district-level standing wellness committee; policies and practices to reduce sugar in school food; transparency about school foods; amount of scratch cooking; variety and repetition of meals; policies about marketing of foods of minimal nutritional value in school; and the existence and quality of salad bars.



State Delegate Diana Fennell (middle) and RFKM Executive Director Lindsey Parsons (right) testifying in support of the School Food Transparency Act.

Financial Report

Statement of Financial Position as of 6/30/16

ASSETS	
Cash and Cash Equivalents	13,627
Grants Receivable	4,200
Security Deposits	520
TOTAL ASSETS	18,347
LIABILITIES & NET ASSETS	
Liabilities	-
Net Assets	
Unrestricted Net Assets	804
Net Income	17,543
TOTAL NET ASSETS	18,347
TOTAL LIABILITIES & NET ASSETS	18,347

Statement of Activities Fiscal Year 2015 (1/1/15-12/31/15)

SUPPORT, REVENUE AND GAINS	
Foundation Grants	25,600
Business Contributions and Sponsorships	3,520
Individual Contributions	25,380
Special Events	9,794
Gifts in Kind - Goods	4,980
Products and Publications	30
TOTAL SUPPORT, REVENUE AND GAINS	69,304
EXPENSES	
Program Services	
Advocacy, Research, Education, Support	38,602
Lobbying	8,801
Special Events	8,585
TOTAL PROGRAM EXPENSES	55,988
Support Services	
Administration	11,399
Fundraising	11,171
TOTAL SUPPORT SERVICES	22,570
In-Kind Expenses	4,980
TOTAL EXPENSES	83,537
DECREASE IN NET ASSETS	-14,233

Principal Business, Government and Institutional Funders (2015-2016)

Audrey S. Cowart, LLC
 CareFirst Blue Cross Blue Shield of Maryland
 Children's Innovative Therapy Group, LLC
 Chipotle
 Chop't
 Coastal Sunbelt Produce
 Dress it Up Dressing
 Fitzgerald Auto Mall
 Founding Farmers
 Hirsch Pediatrics
 Jim and Carol Trawick Foundation
 Maryland Farm Bureau
 Montgomery County Farm Bureau

Mead Family Foundation
 Michael Meyer & Associates
 Montgomery Magazine
 North Chevy Chase Elementary School PTA
 Pediatric and Adolescent Care of Silver Spring
 Silver Diner
 Takoma Park Silver Spring Co-op
 The Common Market Mid-Atlantic
 Waxman Strategies
 Wegman's
 Whole Foods Market
 Whole Kids Foundation

Major Donors (2015-2016)

Ensign and Lana Cowell
 Laura Evans and Mike Manatos
 Joseph Hawkins

Lisa Mandell
 Julie Perlman

Advisory Board 2015-2016

Lisa Büttner, BA (Engineering) and MA (Environmental Studies), Brown University. Worked for 16 years in rural and renewable energy project development, including 9 at Winrock International, primarily in Latin America. Currently PTA Garden Committee Chair at Rolling Terrace ES, leading the development of an edible school garden program and helping to build a network among similar programs in Montgomery County.

Elena de Toledo, Student Advisory Board Member; rower at Bethesda-Chevy Chase High School

Karen Devitt, BA (English), The College of William and Mary; Co-Founder, Real Food for Kids – Montgomery; musical instruction and entertainment professional

Laura Evans, BA (American Studies and Spanish), University of San Diego; Journalist and Newscaster, Fox 5 News

Edward Guss, BS (Business Administration), Seton Hall University, MPA, University of Maryland, post graduate Fellowship at Woodrow Wilson School, Princeton University. Retired from 20 years in Senior Executive Service with the federal government, including posts as Director of Management Sciences at the US Department of Energy and Deputy Executive Director of the US Savings Bonds for the Department of the Treasury and retired from teaching as Adjunct Associate Professor at the University of Maryland University College

Marla Hollander, MPH (Master of Public Health), Emory University; National Partnership Manager, American Heart Association

Joseph Hawkins, BA (Anthropology), Boston University and MA (Education), Howard University; retired last year as Senior Study Director at Westat (an employee-owned social science research firm) but continues there as a part-time consultant.

George Leventhal, MPA (Master of Public Administration), Johns Hopkins University; President, Montgomery County Council

Lisa Mandell, LBA (Psychology and Economics), University of Michigan; freelance copywriter, MCCPTA Delegate, PTA board member and wellness committee chair

Gabriela Massie, BS (Industrial Chemistry), Universidad San Francisco, Quito-Ecuador; Research and Development, Quality Assurance, and Food Safety, for quick-service food chains, such as KFC, Taco Bell, Pizza Hut, and Subway, in the Latin American division. PTA President-Elect, and green team chair for Beverly Farms ES; Nutrition Coordinator, Cedar Lane Cooperative Nursery School.

Monica Medrek, Secretary, MPA (Economic and Social Development) University of Pittsburgh; BA (International Relations and Russian Language) University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee; Certified Health Coach and Wellness Counselor, Founder, Healthy Living Happy Life LLC

Colin Park, Student Advisory Board Member; Judo Practitioner, Poolesville High School

Lindsey Parsons, EdD (Doctor of Education), Griffith University; MA (Romance Linguistics), University of Texas at Austin; Executive Director, Real Food for Kids - Montgomery

Jane Welna, Chair, BA, Carleton College; Director of Development, Center for Science in the Public Interest

Staff 2015-2016

Staff

Lindsey Parsons, Executive Director

Marissa Walker, Membership Coordinator (volunteer)

Interns

Sara Ayemonche, School Nutrition Outreach, Spring 2016

Justin Deckert, Policy, Advocacy, and Strategy, Summer 2015

Hannah Dentry, School Nutrition Outreach, Summer 2015

Elias Fekadu, Communications, Summer 2015

Julie Kromash, Fundraising and Communications, AY 2015-2016

Melissa Mera, Policy, Advocacy, and Strategy, Fall 2015

Laura Reiman, Communications, Fall 2015

Lou Sparace, Fundraising and Development, Spring 2016

Beverly Uzoma, Fundraising and Development, Summer 2015



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