

District administrators face a spork in the road: Outsource, or keep school meal offerings in-house?

Russell Schallock has led the district's house-operated program for eight and a half years. His menus provide your typical institutional fare: cheeseburgers, pizza and the innovative nacho dog. But he has also made strides toward healthier options, like 50 percent organic salad bars and whole-wheat buns.

Steve Barrett, Springfield deputy superintendent, would like to see an increase in the hot lunch participation rates, which currently hover around 56 percent for elementary school students and 14 percent for high-schoolers. Barrett is not certain that outsourcing will solve that problem — or, for that matter, provide the nutrition education lacking in the current system. But he feels that something needs to change.

Springfield School District's food service company of choice, Chartwells, serves about 2.5 million children per day and is part of the multinational Compass Group, which partners with Burger King and Wendy's. Their food meets USDA guidelines while providing meals heavy on meat and cheese, which they and other providers purchase as government commodities for rock-bottom prices.

Although distribution networks and price restrictions made local food offerings difficult during Schallock's tenure, Chartwells may be even less likely to provide local or organic options. Meredith Whitten, project coordinator for the local Food On! Farm to Cafeteria program, argues that "by going to outsourced food, you're losing control of your own destiny."

Several districts around the country have

blazed a trail to a place where kids learn about nutrition, cooking and growing food as part of their school lunch programs. Local farmers provide much of the food, and kids grow some of their own in school gardens. That's unlikely to happen under an outsourced food service provider such as Chartwells. "The big guys at the moment haven't yet figured out how to incorporate local and organic foods into their distribution model," Whitten says. "It's just easier for a small system to do so."

On June 12, the Springfield School Board voted for the road increasingly traveled. Beginning in fall 2007, Chartwells will provide district lunches. — *Sarah Mazze*

CARAVAN TO CUBA COMING

Over the New Year's holiday of 1993-1994, kindergarten teacher Carol Cross visited Cuba. What she saw there surprised her — and kicked her life of crime into gear.

Since her first trip, Cross has traveled 18 more times to Cuba, and says she "has no intention ever of obeying the immoral laws of the blockade." In November 2005, 182 countries of the U.N. General Assembly voted against the U.S. blockade of Cuba, with only the U.S., Israel, Palau, and the Marshall Islands voting for it.

Cross comes to town Wednesday, June 21, as part of the Cuba Caravan. The caravan, sponsored by the Interreligious Foundation for Community Organization's Pastors for Peace, travels across the country. Cross' carav-

Happening people

BY PAUL NEEVEL

SUZANNE PONSIOEN

The granddaughter of Dutch magic realist painter Johan Ponsioen, Suzanne Ponsioen studied art therapy in Nijmegen, Holland. She worked with drug addicts and jail inmates as a therapist in Germany and Holland in the mid-'90s, then moved to Oregon and the former Livewood Commune on Fall Creek in '98. "We lived in a little wooden cabin," she says. "That's where Liva was born. I was a stay-at-home mom." Four years later, after she moved into Eugene, Ponsioen contacted Sister Margaret Graziano, art therapist and chaplain at the Lane County jail, about doing a class. "It was scary — the jails in Holland are more like a hotel — but I loved it from the start," she says. "The inmates are just ordinary people who made unfortunate choices." Now a full-time student in marriage and family therapy at the UO with a part-time job teaching teenagers at Looking Glass, Ponsioen still holds one class a month for 12 or so male inmates at the jail. Her own artwork is on view through July 8 in a three-person show at the Corvallis Art Center. Liva finishes first grade this week at the Family School.



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