

New recipes for a new school year

By **JESSICA POLLARD**
STAFF WRITER

Italian style paninis and garlic kale dip might not be the first items someone imagines chowing down on in a school cafeteria. But a culinary workshop hosted by Umatilla High School is looking to change that.

The workshop was hosted Aug. 16 by the the Oregon Department of Education Child Nutrition Programs and Oregon Dairy and Nutrition Council with involvement from the Oregon State University Extension office's Food Hero campaign. It had cafeteria workers from across Eastern Oregon preparing an extensive menu of items with unique flavors that still align with national nutrition standards.

Jessica Visinsky, a child nutrition specialist with the ODE, who spearheaded the workshop, knows this is no easy feat.

"(Workers) are basically putting on Thanksgiving dinner every weekday by 11 a.m.," she said.

This is the third year that the workshop, which travels across the state, has stopped in Umatilla.

Those who participated also honed their knife skills as they worked in different teams to prepare a large lunch for people wishing to sample the menu items, which ranged from veggie quesadillas to a sweet cinnamon apple bake.

Visinsky said there are some misconceptions when it comes to school lunches.

"We may be serving pizza in school, but it's got whole grain crust and low-fat cheese," she said.

Rikkilynn Starliper, child nutrition director for the Umatilla School District, said many parents don't know that ready-to-serve items like chocolate milk and heat-and-serve items like quesadillas come from companies that specifically formulate them to meet national guidelines.

Countywide, almost 70% of students were eligible for free and reduced lunch during the 2018-19 school year, according to the ODE. That number increases to 80% of students throughout the district in Umatilla. Schools in the Umatilla district are unique in the sense that they take part in the USDA Community Eligibility Provision, which allows them to provide meals to students at no cost.

With so many students taking part in school lunch, fitting in scratch cooking like the kind taught during the workshop can prove difficult.

Starliper said that when the district first hosted a culinary workshop, they walked away with a popular Bánh mì recipe, but that they only offer it a couple times a month because it's so labor intensive and in such high demand.

"It's difficult to transition to scratch cooking when you have staff that have been doing the same thing for years," she added.

Mary Smith, who works in the Clara Brownell Middle School cafeteria, noted that not much from the workshop gets to come to life in the kitchen.

"We do some scratch cooking, but not everything. There's just too many kids," she said.

Starliper said the district



Staff photo by Ben Lonergan
Danielle Lindbeck, of Long Creek, stirs a pot of vegetable yakisoba during a culinary workshop at Umatilla High School. The workshop served as an opportunity for school cooks to exchange recipes and ideas. The workshops were hosted by the Oregon Department of Education Child Nutrition Program and the Oregon Dairy and Nutrition Council.



Staff photo by Ben Lonergan
Jennifer Valle, left, Cira Larsen and Ellie Dutcher collaborate on creating a dipping sauce for the quesadillas that they made during a culinary workshop at Umatilla High School.

is hoping to include more scratch cooking in the future. The district has other culinary projects in store for the upcoming school year as well.

They just purchased four "healthy celebration" carts, which come loaded with the

equipment needed to make smoothies during classroom celebrations.

"It's easier for teachers and families to take that cart to the classroom. Instead of having cookies and cupcakes, the kids can bring in fruit, yogurt and granola and

make a smoothie," Starliper said.

She's also looking forward to the addition of a FoodCorps member, who will focus on educating students about nutrition, to McNary Heights Cafeteria this year.



Staff photo by Ben Lonergan
Angie Treadwell (center front) leads a training on incorporating physical activity into the classroom.

Research shows that PE in schools can be life-changing

By **JESSICA POLLARD**
STAFF WRITER

School districts around the state are trying their best to keep up with increasing physical education requirements, even if it means playing around in the classroom.

The change is part of an incremental plan laid out by the state Legislature in 2007 designed to get Oregon students exercising more — 150 minutes a week for elementary students, and 225 minutes a week for middle school students — by the 2017 school year. When schools weren't able to keep up, another bill was passed, giving districts until the end of the 2020-2021 school year to meet the requirements.

Elementary schools are expected to start providing 120 minutes this year. That's where Angie Treadwell, SNAP-Ed coordinator for Oregon State University Extensions, comes in.

For the past few months, Treadwell and her team have been introducing educators at Hermiston, Umatilla, and Morrow County school districts to in-class kits with activities that meet the state physical edu-

cation standards. She said that it's not always realistic for schools to hire another PE teacher in order to reach the requirements.

"This kind of thing has the ability to impact these kids for a lifetime," Treadwell said.

The kits, dubbed Be Physically Active 2Day (BEPA 2.0), cost nearly \$100 and provides classroom-based physical activities designed for elementary schoolers of all ages.

Treadwell said donations from Lamb Weston helped OSU Extension provide the kits to different schools.

They provide teachers with everything they need to lead activities from bean-bag balancing competitions to a hot-and-cold style game called "Find the Veggie," all of which fit state physical education standards.

"They reinforce a lot of classroom concepts as well," Treadwell said.

Katherine Gunter, a professor of kinesiology and OSU Extension statewide physical activity specialist, designed the BEPA 2.0 kits and said that the link between physical activity and obesity prevention is pretty clear.



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