



## **The Village School Is a Grand Prize Winner 2015 Golden Carrot Awards for National School Lunch Week**

*Physicians Committee Provides the Public Charter School with a National School Lunch Award to Celebrate All-Vegetarian Menu*

**The nonprofit Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine awards a grand prize to the Village School in Eugene, Ore., in the 2015 Golden Carrot Awards.** The Village School will receive the award and a \$2,015 cash prize during National School Lunch Week starting on Oct. 13 in recognition of its **exceptionally healthful plant-based school lunches** and **outstanding health promotion initiatives.**

The Village Kitchen serves a made-from-scratch vegetarian menu packed with fresh, mostly organic ingredients. The kitchen prioritizes local ingredients, with some of its **vegetables and**

**herbs originating in the school's own garden.** Popular entrée items include:

- chickpea coconut curry,
- black bean and brown rice bowls served with
- fresh vegetables and
- **locally made vegan Yumm! Sauce,** and
- Pad Thai topped with tofu and seasonal vegetables.
- All lunches include fresh fruit and unlimited salad bar access.

“By serving a plant-based menu filled with brain-boosting and disease-fighting fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and legumes, the Village School is planting the seed for healthy habits from day one,” says **Cameron Wells, M.P.H., R.D.**, associate director of clinical dietetics for the Physicians Committee.

“Students who form health-promoting eating habits early on in life reduce their risk for obesity, diabetes, heart disease, certain forms of cancer, and dementia later on in life.”

Kitchen staff members involve students throughout the lunch process. Students harvest produce in the garden, volunteer in the kitchen, write out daily menu boards, and participate in taste-tests. Students are also encouraged to try “thank you bites” of new foods, including roasted cauliflower, to expand their palates. Enthusiastic staff members encourage students by incorporating nutrition education and cooking classes into the curriculum and modeling healthy choices in the cafeteria.

**These efforts have paid off: Approximately 84 percent of students participate in the Village School’s lunch program daily, compared with a national average of 56 percent.**

The Village School keeps costs down by buying nutrient-dense ingredients including grains and beans in bulk and simplifying the menu by offering one main entrée, along with a full salad bar, each day.

“With just two in 10 children meeting the recommended five daily servings of fruits and vegetables, our children are at risk for chronic health problems earlier than ever before. It’s encouraging to see parents, teachers, staff, and students working together at the Village School to reverse these trends and prioritize health and nutrition,” adds Wells.

The school plans to use the school lunch grant to build a brand new kitchen to continue to create healthful scratch-cooked meals.

For an interview with Village School Kitchen Coordinator Toña Aguilar or Ms. Wells, please contact Laura Anderson at [landerson@pcrm.org](mailto:landerson@pcrm.org) or 202-527-7396.

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**Congratulations, Village School!**

If you are a school or organization wanting more information on upgrading to healthful, plant-based meals, contact EVEN at [eugvedunet@comcast.net](mailto:eugvedunet@comcast.net)

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**Eugene Veg Education Network**

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