



UNITED FRESH START FOUNDATION

NEWS RELEASE

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United Fresh Start Foundation Connects Chicago Produce Members with Local School District

*Visit Gives Local Donors a First-hand Look into
How Schools are Using Salad Bars and Increasing Produce Consumption*

AURORA, IL (September 30, 2016) – On Wednesday, September 28, the United Fresh Start Foundation organized an opportunity for salad bar donors from the Chicago area to visit several schools in East Aurora School District 131. The group had an opportunity to observe students using their new salad bars and learn about the district's other innovative programs that are increasing students' access and consumption of fresh produce at school and at home.

"The leaders in this school district have shown that they are fully invested in the health and wellbeing of the children and families in their community," said Andrew Marshall, Director of Programs and Partnerships for the United Fresh Start Foundation. "They have rallied parents, teachers, local government, nonprofit and community partners to support multiple nutrition strategies, including school salad bars, that are increasing students' access to fresh fruits and vegetables. We were honored to learn about their work and share their efforts with local produce industry partners."

Prior to the start of the 2016-17 school year, the East Aurora School District 131 (EASD 131) received 9 new salad bars with more to be delivered in the months ahead. These contributions were made possible by the following produce companies and individuals, as part of the Foundation's *Let's Move Salad Bars to Schools* initiative:

- JAB Produce/Jack Keller Co.
- Mark Harrison, Del Monte Fresh Produce N.A., Inc.
- Potandon Produce
- Potatoes USA
- Strube Celery & Vegetable Company
- Lisa Strube, Rob Strube and Sue Hunter, Strube Celery & Vegetable Company

The Foundation worked with local school foodservice officials to arrange visits to Benavides Kindergarten Center and East Aurora High School. At each location, the industry members met with the principal, teachers and community partners, to better understand the ways in which health education, and access to fresh fruits and vegetables, are incorporated throughout the school environment.

At the Benavides Kindergarten Center, the group had a chance to see a kindergarten class tasting fresh green beans, as part of the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program (FFVP). At East Aurora High School, they

toured the cafeteria to see the new salad bar, and also the school garden, where students are growing a variety of fruits and vegetables, such as tomatoes, tomatillos, jalapeno and habanero peppers, cantaloupe, broccoli, kale and more.

The participants also heard from the school district's community partners about implementing a USDA Farm to School grant, participating in the USDA Food Waste Challenge and implementing the County Health Department's "Fit for Kids" program. In addition, they learned about the district's partnership with the Aurora Farmers' Market, which administers a fruit and vegetable prescription program, a double value bonus program for SNAP participants and a program that provides children with a \$5 voucher to purchase fresh produce in return for visiting the Farmers' Market.

"This school visit was eye opening," said Lisa Strube, Director of Finance for the Strube Celery and Vegetable Company. "Visiting schools that are so committed to the health and well-being of their students was truly encouraging. I'm delighted these salad bar donations have been such a tremendous benefit to this district."

"We appreciate our partnership with the United Fresh Start Foundation," said Margo Schmitt, Foodservice Coordinator for EASD 131. "Starting off the school year with new salad bars in our schools, and now getting to engage with local produce industry members has been a great experience for all of us. We are excited to continue our efforts to promote healthy, fresh produce options for our students."

Schmitt, whose district feeds more than 12,000 students each day, was also a participant in the Foundation's *Produce Forum for School Success* at United Fresh 2016. The two-day event that brought more than 50 school foodservice buyers together to share best practices, see new and innovative produce items, and engage with the broader produce industry.

This recent visit to the East Aurora School District is an example of the Foundation's work to connect produce members with school foodservice leaders, helping these interconnected entities understand each other's shared commitment to increasing children's access to fresh fruits and vegetables. The United Fresh Start Foundation works to create an environment in which kids have easy access to fresh fruits and vegetables, helping children achieve the public health goal to make half their plate fruits and vegetables in order to live longer and healthier lives.

Pictures



Caption: Lisa Strube, Strube Celery & Vegetable Company, with students at Benavides Kindergarten Center in Aurora, IL tasting fresh greens in their classroom, as part of the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program.



Caption: Simon Seibert, Foodservice Director for the East Aurora School District 131, and Rachael Lynch, Global Marketing Manager, Potatoes USA in front of the salad bar at East Aurora High School, which was donated earlier this year by Potatoes USA.



Caption: Mark Harrison, Del Monte Fresh Produce N.A., talks with school officials, community partners and produce attendees about the 2016 Tour de Fresh, and how his efforts in this cycling fundraiser helped bring a salad bar to the East Aurora School District 131.



Caption: Chicago-area produce members toured the Benavides Kindergarten Center and East Aurora High School on Wednesday. The visits were organized by the United Fresh Start Foundation. Pictured (Left to Right) are Margo Schmitt, East Aurora School District 131, Steve Serck, JAB Produce, Rob

Strube, Strube Celery & Vegetable Company, Mark Harrison, Del Monte Fresh Produce N.A., Alison Chiaro, FarmLogix, Sue Hunter, Strube Celery & Vegetable Company, Lisa Strube, Strube Celery & Vegetable Company, PJ Stevens, Potandon Produce and Rachael Lynch, Potatoes USA.

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About the United Fresh Start Foundation

The United Fresh Start Foundation is focused exclusively on increasing children’s access to fresh fruits and vegetables, and inspiring the next generation to “choose fresh” whenever and wherever they are eating their next snack or meal. Working with the produce industry, local nonprofits, healthcare organizations, allied businesses, and others, the United Fresh Start Foundation is committed to helping today’s youth achieve the public health goal of making half their plate fruits and vegetables in order to live longer, healthier lives. Join our movement to ensure kids everywhere are “Growing Up Fresh!”