



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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West Contra Costa Unified School District Board of Education Votes YES for The Conscious Kitchen

Organic food for children at Peres and Madera Elementary Schools One Year Pilot Program

May 25, 2017 – The West Contra Costa Unified School District Board of Education approved a partnership agreement at the Wednesday board meeting between the WCCUSD and The Conscious Kitchen (TCK) aimed at shifting the school food paradigm. The agreement authorizes TCK, Peres Elementary in Richmond and Madera Elementary in El Cerrito to jointly raise funds to support a year-long Conscious Kitchen pilot at Peres and Madera Elementary Schools for the 2017/18 school year, as a critical investment in the health and well-being of our youth, local food system, economy and community.

Please join us for a celebratory luncheon and press conference :

When: Wednesday, March 31, 2017 **from Noon – 1:30 pm**

(Please arrive by 11:45 am. We will begin the press conference promptly at Noon with lunch to follow)

Where: **Peres Elementary School** 719 5th Street in Richmond (Street parking along 5th St. and Pennsylvania Ave.)

The TCK-WCCUSD partnership is geared towards solving one of the most pressing societal challenges facing our country today – a lack of access to healthy, nutritious food for all children, regardless of demographics or socioeconomic factors. TCK was created to address this need and offer a groundbreaking new model for school food service. TCK partners with schools and school districts to transition school meals from traditional pre-packaged, heat and serve to chef prepared, scratch cooked meals prepared in on-site school kitchens, based on five foundational attributes; fresh, local, organic, seasonal and non-GMO (FLOSN).

“Our students and the entire school community were deeply inspired by the success of the Conscious Kitchen demonstration week earlier this year. During just one week, teachers reported that students were calmer, more attentive, and complained less about stomachaches; and we witnessed enhanced community bonds, as teachers and students shared meals together, students embraced food-focused education, enthusiastically took on leadership skills, and participated in hands-on zero waste education. We look forward to building on that success.” said **Lisa LeBlanc, Associate Superintendent, WCCUSD**.

Through a partnership with UCSF Family Health Outcomes Project, (FHOP), the Conscious Kitchen pilots include an evidence-based, innovative Learning Lab component. “A key goal with the Conscious Kitchen pilot is to measure the impact of the program through community-based participatory research,” said **Dr. Jennifer Rienks, Associate Director, UCSF FHOP**. “Students, teachers and UCSF-led researchers will collect quantitative and qualitative data about the impact of healthy school food on academics, learning readiness, emotional health, preventable disease (such as diabetes and obesity), jobs and regional economies, local food systems, as well as food and packaging waste. Data will be used for continuous quality improvement.”

As a community designed and centered program, partnerships are instrumental to the success of the program. **Chef, author, food activist, and founder/owner, Chez Panisse and Edible Schoolyard, Alice Waters** has teamed up with The Conscious Kitchen as it closely aligns with a shared goal to raise the profile of school lunches, incorporating school lunch into the curriculum as a core academic subject. “School supported agriculture will strengthen our

farmers, ranchers and soil; while coalescing our schools and communities through food,” said Waters. It’s not only imperative to ensure that every child is nourished through ethically produced organic food, but also, we view school lunches as a culturally enriching educational opportunity; food honors tradition and cultures, has historical significance and is uniquely engaging for students and the school community as they break bread together and share their unique stories over meals,” continues Waters.

“When I started training it was rare to see a child with high blood pressure, high blood sugar, high cholesterol, high triglycerides, or a waist size over 36 or 40 inches — all conditions of middle age or the elderly. Today 2/3 of American kids already have at least one of those conditions. As recently as 20 years ago, it wasn’t this way. We know it can’t be our genes, because genes don’t change that quickly. Providing nutritious food, grown responsibly without chemicals, is a crucial step we can take right now to help prevent this rapidly unfolding health crisis,” said **pediatrician and author, Dr. Alan Greene**, who is partnering with UCSF in the Learning Lab component.

“We are proud to partner with the vibrant community in West Contra Costa. The students, parents, teachers, district leadership, civic leaders, chefs, and non-profits partners are forward thinking and committed to creating a lasting school food framework that will support the health and life outcomes for their children, and generations that follow,” said **Judi Shils, Founder and Executive Director of The Conscious Kitchen**. “TCK is designed to remove barriers of access to healthy food for all children, while also providing them with education, tools and skills, and instilling behavior changes at an early age, leading to lifelong healthier habits.”

For more information about [The Conscious Kitchen](#)

With tremendous gratitude to our supporters who make this groundbreaking program possible –

Conscious Kitchen Partners

West Contra Costa Unified School District, Peres Elementary School, Madera Elementary School, Cavallo Point Lodge, Clif Bar, Dr. Bronner’s, EO Products, Good Earth Natural Foods, Klean Kanteen, Straus Family Creamery, RW Garcia, El Cerrito Rotary Club, First Dollar Foundation, Julie and Will Parish, and John and Betty Gaye Potter

Farmers, ranchers, purveyors, chefs

Mindful Meats, Mary’s Organic Chicken, Rock Island, Straus Family Creamery, Lundberg Family Farms, Tomatero Farms, Full Belly Farm, Oren’s Kitchen, Prospect San Francisco, El Cerrito Natural Grocery and Earl’s Organic Produce,

Chefs

Justin Everett, Cavallo Point Lodge; Guillaume Pfahl, Conscious Kitchen; Suzette Gresham, Acquarello; Pam Mazzola, Prospect SF; Daniel Tellez, Copita; Jason Fox, Commonwealth; Mark Dommen, One Market; Juan Chel, Fonda; Arnon Oren, Oren’s Kitchen; Massimo Covello, Radici; Tera Ancona, Cibo; Ethan Howard, Cavallo Point Lodge; Marcelo Mino, El Cerrito Natural Grocery

People and businesses

Lisa LeBlanc, Jawan Eldridge, Christy Chen, Kelly Cary, Guillaume Pfahl, Justin Everett, Alison Makala, Barbara Jellison, Alena Andress, Kelly Cary, Al Baylacq, Kelly Browning, Shannon Kerr, Deneane Hannon, Rosa Koyoc, Dr. Jennifer Reinks, Barbara Sobel, Therese Vreeland, Stacy Malkan, Susan Black, Alice Waters, Edible School Yard, Dr. Alan Greene, YES Nature to Neighborhoods, Caroleigh Pierce, Lisa Baylacq, Fanny Powell, Cayson Designs, Silver King, US Pure Water, Williams Sonoma

About The Conscious Kitchen

The Conscious Kitchen works to improve the health, well-being, and life outcomes for youth and communities by shifting the paradigm around food service and cultivating a local ecological food system in and around our schools. TCK partners with schools and districts to transform school lunches from the traditional pre-packaged, heat and serve school food model to scratch-cooked, chef-prepared, fresh, local, organic, seasonal, non-GMO (FLOSIN) meals prepared in on-site, zero-waste school kitchens