

# Annual Report

## Academic Year 2014-2015

### RFKM's Key Victories

#### MCPS Bans Chemical Additives from School Food!!

This year, RFKM was overjoyed to learn that after over a year of advocacy work related to chemicals in school food, MCPS Director of Food and Nutrition Services Marla Caplon announced that from now on, a number of dangerous additives will be prohibited from bids for food served in its cafeterias. The list includes several artificial food dyes (Blue 2, Green 3, Red 3, Yellow 5 and 6); artificial sweeteners aspartame, acesulfame-potassium and saccharin; trans fat; lean finely textured beef (AKA pink slime); MSG; BHA and TBHQ. RFKM expressed concern about some of these chemicals due to studies linking them to ADHD, cancer and other adverse effects. An examination of the MCPS Procurement web site already shows bid specs asking for no artificial colors or flavors, so changes should be on the way.



#### MCPS to Establish Standing Wellness Committee

After more than 2 years of advocacy on this issue, MCPS has agreed to establish a standing Wellness Committee. According to MCPS' Acting COO, Andrew Zuckerman: "The committee will be composed of a broad cross section of stakeholders as outlined in the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010, and the purpose will be to periodically review and update our wellness policy, as based on best practices."

*(continued on p. 2)*

### RFKM and the Changing of our School Food Environment

According to the CDC Youth Behavior Risk Survey Results for 2013, 20% of high school students in Montgomery County are overweight or obese, leading to an increased risk of diabetes and other health problems. Obesity rates for Black and Hispanics are more than double that of Whites. As there is a growing body of research that suggests that obesity is associated with poorer academic performance beginning as early as kindergarten, this may explain some portion of the achievement gap in MCPS. In the interest of our children's health, development, and education, it is vital that the quality of MCPS food be improved.



Real Food for Kids - Montgomery (RFKM) serves as a champion for healthier food for the children in MCPS. While the food served in the Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) currently follows USDA standards, our members are unsatisfied with MCPS's unhealthy a la carte food options, and other foods and beverages sold through vending machines, school stores, and snack bars. Many of these foods are high in sugar and also contain food dyes and chemical additives known to cause cancer and/or hyperactivity in sensitive children. RFKM members are also concerned about the repeating school menu options, which cause children to become accustomed to the consumption of unhealthy fast food choices such as pizza, burgers, French fries, pancakes, French toast and cinnamon rolls.

Since 2012, RFKM has built a coalition of over 4000 supporters, including parents from 182 of the 202 public schools in the county. RFKM also has 62 official representatives to MCPS schools. These representatives take a leadership role in changing the food environment and policies at their child's school.

RFKM's vision is a school system that serves and promotes fresh, wholesome, local, sustainable, nutrient-rich foods and a student body that selects and eats those foods. Our mission is to mobilize parents, students, educators and community members to promote policies, practices, and educational opportunities that improve the food environment, health, and well-being of all students in MCPS.

## RFKM's Key Victories (continued from p. 1)

We are very glad that MCPS has agreed to take this step and hope that this will open up an opportunity for parents and other stakeholders outside of MCPS to weigh in on a policy that impacts the wellness of our children and, therefore, our present and future community.



The agreement to establish this committee came after 5 months of meetings by a Wellness Regulation Revision Work Group, in which RFKM's Executive Director Lindsey Parsons took part. While this group was composed of only 15 people (including 2 parents, 2 students, a representative from Share our Strength, the head of school nurses, the holder of the vending contract with MCPS - an obvious conflict of interest, and the remainder employees of MCPS), we are hopeful and are working to ensure that a future committee will include at least 50% non-MCPS employees, including representatives from non-profit organizations, medical professionals, nutrition professors, community wellness organizations and a much larger contingent of parents (ideally at least 25%).

The temporary Wellness Regulation Revision Work Group, which was only updating the competitive food regulations, voted to change the Wellness Regulation in a couple positive ways, including limiting sugar in an 8-oz. serving of chocolate milk to 21 grams if available (12 are naturally occurring), and prohibiting the artificial sweetener acesulfame-potassium in school food. Unfortunately, it also voted for changes that RFKM fought against, including increasing the allowable serving sizes of juice and milk (including chocolate milk) sold in schools. In adopting USDA regulations on beverages, the committee also weakened the MCPS Wellness Regulation by allowing low calorie, added-sugar beverages (maximum 60 cal. per 12 oz. serving), which were previously not permitted. In practical terms, this means Fruit Wave H2O, the flavored water sold in secondary schools with 3.5 tps of added sugar per serving, will now be permitted. For 2 years, it has been sold in violation of MCPS's own wellness regulation. The holder of the vending contract with MCPS is also part-owner of the company that manufactures and distributes Fruit Wave H2O.

While we fought as hard as we could against these weaker standards, there was little chance to debate stronger standards and the scientific basis for them given the structure and timeframe of the committee. With the initiation of a standing Wellness Committee, we are hopeful to start off on a new foot to work towards a wellness policy and regulation for MCPS that scores better than the current 34 (F) for comprehensiveness and 20 (F) for strength, according to evaluations using the WellSAT 2.0, a wellness policy evaluation tool developed by the Rudd Center for Food Policy and Obesity.

### RFKM Secures Better Access to Water

In response to our advocacy day on June 3, 2014, MCPS also announced in fall 2014 that they will be offering 8 ounce bottles of water free to any elementary school child purchasing lunch! RFKM has been lobbying for free and accessible water for students for quite some time and are thankful for this better access to water for some MCPS students. We are hoping that this change will make it less likely that students will buy other sugar-filled drinks, like flavored milk or juice, since they will already be provided with a healthy and free drink option. Previously, children who had milk allergies or lactose intolerance were offered a free juice. In order to get a cup to fill with water, they were required to provide a doctor's order. Nevertheless, we will continue to work towards more environmentally sustainable solutions, such as water refill stations in cafeterias, reusable water bottles on supply lists and backup cups in the cafeteria.



### RFKM Co-Founders Given Azalea Award

On Sunday, May 17, the Takoma Foundation awarded Karen Devitt and Lindsey Parsons, RFKM's co-founders, the Azalea Award for School Activist. We are very happy and thankful for this recognition of our work by the foundation and the people of Takoma Park.

## 5 for 5 Challenge

This year, RFKM started a new fundraiser called the 5 for 5 Challenge. For the 5 days of **Maryland Homegrown School Lunch Week** (Sept. 15-19, 2014) we challenged MCPS students to eat 5 servings of fruits and vegetables a day and raise at least \$5/serving to support the work of RFKM. We raised \$1,780 - not to mention the benefit to the participants who ate the recommended five servings of fruits and vegetables for five days in a row and tried out new fruits and vegetables! There were special prizes for the child who ate the greatest variety of fruits and vegetables and for the child who raised the most money. We are planning to repeat the 5 for 5 Challenge in the fall of 2015 and hopefully expand it to adults via their workplaces.



## Lindsey Joins Montgomery County Food Council



RFKM's Executive Director Lindsey Parsons was invited to join the Montgomery County Food Council for a two-year term starting in January, 2015. Her acceptance as a voting member of the Food Council is a vote of confidence in the work of RFKM and our representation of mainstream beliefs about the need to improve school food. This position gives Lindsey another platform and perspective to work on school food and county-wide food issues, including healthier food advocacy, food access, school gardens, food recovery, sustainability and promotion of buying local and local farmers.

## RFKM Awarded Grants from Mead Family Foundation and Jim and Carol Trawick Foundation

We are very grateful to again have the support of the Mead Family Foundation, who awarded RFKM a grant of \$20,000 for general operating support for our organization. Their support last year allowed us to dream bigger and raise enough funds for Lindsey to become the full-time Executive Director of RFKM. We are also very thankful to the Jim and Carol Trawick Foundation, who awarded us a grant for office space at their offices in Bethesda for this year. With four summer interns this summer, we're very thankful for the space and their support!

## Whole Foods Partners with RFKM

This year, Whole Foods agreed to partner with RFKM in our efforts to advocate for healthier foods in the Montgomery County Public Schools. Their sponsorship allowed RFKM to save on events throughout the year through the use of their donated catering and meeting spaces. They will also cater a celebration for our 5 for 5 Challenge participants in Sept. 2015. Whole Foods Market is dedicated to natural, organic, healthful foods free of harmful chemical additives, as well as incorporating these values into how they give to the community.

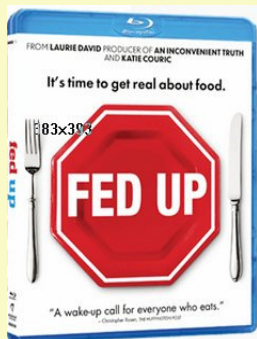


## FED UP Screening a Huge Success

This sold out event in March featured the screening of the documentary FED UP, with Q&A afterwards with our Director, Karen Devitt (left), Aviva Goldfarb, founder of the Six

O'Clock Scramble (middle), and our Executive Director, Lindsey Parsons (right). The audience asked questions on the cost of cooking versus buying processed or fast food, dealing with unhealthy sports snacks, and moving to freshly prepared school meals. County Council President George Leventhal, State Delegate Jeff Waldstreicher and School Board Member Jill Ortman-Fouse all said a few words and shared about their efforts to bring healthier school food to MCPS. Karen McManus of

Congressman Chris Van Hollen's office also attended. We are very grateful to Discovery Communications for the use of their theater and their support for this event.



## Spotlight on Schools

### 2014-2015 Most Improved School Food Award



Chevy Chase ES (CCES) received the 2014-2015 Most Improved School Food Award for their exceptional emphasis on school nutrition. Last year, CCES created a formal wellness committee, which has been the driving force

behind many of the nutrition-related changes that have been made.

This year, CCES instituted RFKM's Healthier Party Plan, incorporating healthy snacks and water into school parties and discouraging soda and foods with artificial colors. CCES has also provided teachers with RFKM's flyer with alternative options to rewarding kids with food in class. The wellness committee at CCES replaced a la carte foods available in the cafeteria that had artificial food dyes and too much sugar with healthier items with high fiber and whole grains.

Furthermore, the staff at CCES has shown their support for nutrition education by inviting nutrition specialists to hold a workshop for parents in April on preparing healthy snacks and lunches. They also made an effort to keep parents informed and to get parents involved in the changes being made to improve the school food environment. In May, CCES hosted a Wellness Week dedicated to educating the students about nutrition. Assemblies were held featuring experts in healthy eating, and a program called "Eat the Rainbow" was promoted to get the children to eat a variety of fruits and vegetables in a fun and engaging way.

CCES has been an advocate for healthy living in the greater community as well as within the school. They held a fundraiser at Nava Health Center to teach parents how to update their holiday meals with healthier recipes and they held a parent-child fitness class fundraiser at Pulse Fitness.

Other notable nominees included:

- Sligo Creek ES—for installing an interactive salad garden, featuring a section for RFKM on the PTA web site, and promoting healthy snacks in the classroom and at parties; and
- Takoma Park ES—for forming a Health and Wellness Committee, promoting nutrition education, and conducting a parent school food survey.

### Rock Creek Forest Elementary School Installs Water Bottle Filling Station

This year, Rock Creek Forest Elementary passed on the great news that they will have a water bottle filling station in their cafeteria as the result of advocacy work by the Rock Creek Forest Wellness Committee!



### 2013-2014 Most Improved School Food Award

In the fall of 2014, RFKM awarded Bradley Hills Elementary School the 2013-2014 Most Improved School



Food Award for accomplishments by their wellness committee, including removing unhealthy a la carte items (gummy fruit snacks, Doritos, ice cream etc.) from the menu and installing a salad bar at the request of parents.

### Spotlight on Schools - Victory at Forest Knolls ES

Craisins and cinnamon rolls are off the



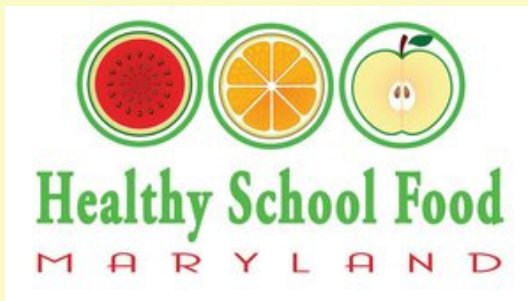
menu at Forest Knolls ES! Parents met with the Division of Food and Nutrition Services and asked for the elimination of these high sugar items from the 'Free breakfast in the classroom' and were granted their request. While chocolate milk with 2 1/4 teaspoons of added sugar is still being given out to kids against their parents' wishes, parents are working on a compromise.

# Statewide Legislative Campaign

For the 2015 Legislative session in Annapolis, RFKM formed a coalition called Healthy School Food Maryland and proposed seven bills, which all had hearings in the Maryland General Assembly. The bills included the following:

1. Jane Lawton Farm-to-School Program Expansion
2. Sugar-Free Schools Act
3. Thirsty Kids Act
4. Vending Machines and Marketing Act
5. School Food Transparency Act
6. School Wellness Committee Act
7. Chemical-Free School Food Act

From January through March, RFKM testified at 13 hearings, organized 53 other oral or written testimonies, and brought 9 people, in addition to Lindsey and Karen, to testify in person at committee hearings. This included representatives from CSPI, the Student Section of the Maryland Public Health Association, Brickyard Educational Farm and the Prince George's Food



Equity Council, as well as our own members. While none of

our bills passed through both chambers, we did have some successes, with the Farm-to-School bill passing in the House (but voted unfavorable in the Senate Committee), and two other bills voted favorable out of the Senate Committee (Thirsty Kids Act and Transparency). Both received opposition on the floor, with the Thirsty Kids Act ultimately being sent back to committee to be killed

and the School Food Transparency bill losing 24-21, with several senators from Montgomery County voting against it. This year's experience will definitely enlighten how and whether we will approach statewide legislation next year.

## Coalition partners on at least one of our bills:

Brickyard Educational Farm  
Center for Science in the Public Interest (CSPI)  
Coalition Halting Obesity Everywhere in Children (CHOICE)  
Crossroads Community Food Network  
First Bites  
GrowingSoul  
Healthy Kinder, Inc.  
Maryland Environmental Health Network  
Montgomery County Food Council  
Montgomery County Sustainability Network  
Montgomery Victory Gardens  
Prince George's County Food Equity Council  
Real Food for Kids - Montgomery  
Safe Grow Montgomery  
Student Section of the Maryland Public Health Association  
Young Activist Club

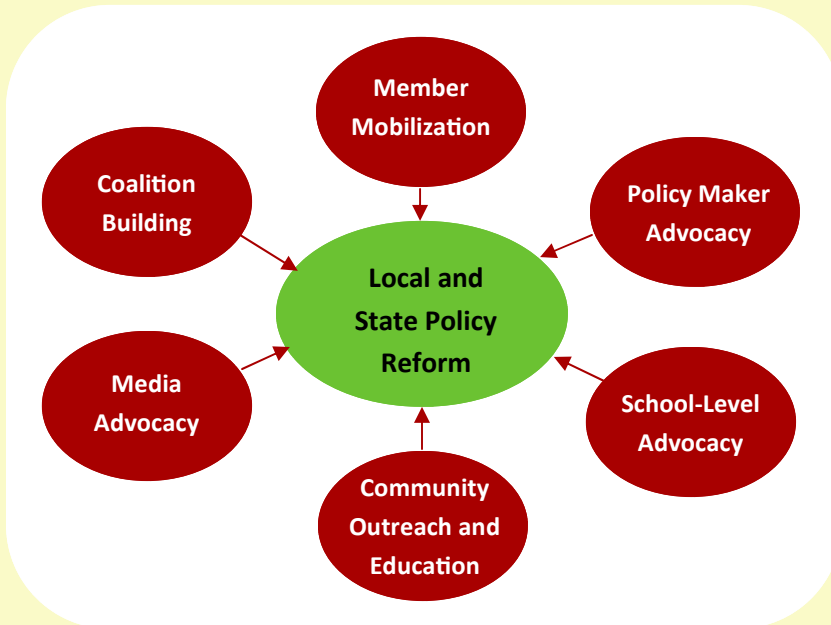
*And special thanks to American Diabetes Association who submitted testimony supporting two of our bills and to Sugar-Free Kids Maryland, who submitted testimony in support of the Thirsty Kids Act.*

## Member Priorities 2015

Each year, RFKM polls its members on their top priorities and advocates for these priorities in Montgomery County and the state of Maryland. These are our priorities for calendar year 2015.

1. Offering at least one meal per day that is not typical "junk food" (e.g. not pizza, hot dogs, chicken nuggets, etc.).
2. Replacing unhealthy a la carte items with healthier items.
3. Eliminating or drastically reducing typical "junk food" options.
4. Setting an upper limit for sugar in any product served in MCPS that is stricter than the current limit of 35% by weight.
5. Offering unlimited fruits and vegetables free to all children who purchase lunch.
6. Removing chemicals from the school food, based on a list developed by the Center for Science in the Public Interest and included in our petition to MCPS. *(Some, but not all, of these chemicals have already been slated for removal in future contracts.)*
7. Moving from processed, pre-plated and reheated food to food cooked from scratch at the central facility, with more prep work done on site at schools with kitchens.
8. Pushing for 25% scratch-cooked main dishes by the start of the 2015-2016 academic year.
9. Replacing unhealthy vending items with healthier items in machines that are on during the school day.
10. Reducing sugar loads per meal (by limiting a la carte purchases, only serving white milk with sugary entree items, or through some other method).

## How We Advocate for Nutritious Food in MCPS



**Member Mobilization:** We grow our membership through reaching out to new parents, teachers and students via school and PTA listservs, social media, back-to-school nights, and other outreach events. Members are polled each year in order to set our school food reform priorities. Members are then mobilized to take action to advocate for better food at their children’s school(s) and on the district and state level.

**Policy Maker Advocacy:** We meet with policy makers on a local and state level both individually and in formal settings, such as testifying before the MCPS school board. We also send e-mails and make phone calls to advocate for policy changes.

**School-Level Advocacy:** We recruit parent representatives at each school in MPCS, conduct trainings for and provide materials to these representatives, and support them in reaching out to other parents to form wellness committees, meet with decision makers and make changes at the local school level.

**Community Outreach and Education:** We participate in city and school fairs and festivals to reach out to the community for membership building and education. We hold movie screenings, seminars and member meetings to educate and inform parents and other community members.

**Media Advocacy:** We send out press releases, call members of the media and respond to media inquiries to keep the public informed about our work.

**Coalition Building:** We reach out to other non-profit organizations, government officials and school food advocates for ideas and mutual support in our policy and legislative agendas.

## Looking Ahead

The RFKM Advisory Board, some of our more active volunteers and some of our outside partners will be meeting on June 27, 2015 to plan our strategy for the coming year. We will continue to work to achieve our members’ top priorities but will be carefully considering which priorities are most achievable, the best strategic approach for achieving each of them and the most likely level at which to achieve them: school, district, state or via manufacturers. Whichever approach we take, we’ll continue to need our members to support our work with your letters, calls, e-mails and in person support as we take advocacy actions, so please keep following our e-news for these requests.



*Maryland State Delegate Jeff Waldstreicher, RFKM Executive Director Lindsey Parsons and MCPS School Board Member Jill Ortman-Fouse at screening of “Fed Up”*

# Financial Report

## Statement of Financial Position as of 4/30/15

<b>ASSETS</b>	
Cash and Cash Equivalents	9,188
Grants Receivable	5,030
In-Kind Items Donated	595
Security Deposit	400
<b>TOTAL ASSETS</b>	<b>15,213</b>
<b>LIABILITIES &amp; NET ASSETS</b>	
Liabilities	-
Net Assets	
Unrestricted Net Assets	15,058
Net Income	156
<b>TOTAL NET ASSETS</b>	<b>15,213</b>
<b>TOTAL LIABILITIES &amp; NET ASSETS</b>	<b>15,213</b>

## Statement of Activities Fiscal Year 2014 (1/1/14-12/31/14)

<b>SUPPORT, REVENUE AND GAINS</b>	
Foundation Grants	15,000
Business Contributions and Sponsorships	872
Individual Contributions	22,728
Special Events	4,075
Gifts in Kind - Goods	953
Government Grants	5,955
Products and Publications	55
<b>TOTAL SUPPORT, REVENUE AND GAINS</b>	<b>49,638</b>
<b>EXPENSES</b>	
Program Services	
Advocacy, Research, Education	26,775
Lobbying	1,692
Special Events	672
<b>TOTAL PROGRAM EXPENSES</b>	<b>29,139</b>
Support Services	
Administration	5,445
Fundraising	3,355
<b>TOTAL SUPPORT SERVICES</b>	<b>8,800</b>
<b>TOTAL EXPENSES</b>	<b>37,939</b>
<b>INCREASE IN NET ASSETS</b>	<b>11,699</b>

## Business, Government and Institutional Funders (2014-2015)

Accomplishment Coaching  
 ADK Personal Training  
 Anthony Marill Photography  
 Bogan Electrical Services  
 C. Fox Communications  
 Capital Impressions  
 City of Takoma Park, Maryland  
 B Design Group  
 Decorating Den Interiors  
 Eye Street Massage Therapy  
 Eyma Salon and Spa  
 Fairmont Hotel  
 Fitness Together Capitol Hill  
 Forest Knolls Pool  
 Founding Farmers  
 FRED Home Repair Services  
 G&C Realty Investment LLC  
 Healthy Living Happy Life  
 Holly Harmon Health

Huckleberry Fine Art Gallery  
 Mead Family Foundation  
 Michael Meyer & Associates  
 Mon Ami Gabi  
 Pediatric and Adolescent Care of Silver Spring  
 Mount Pleasant Massage Therapy  
 Nova Arborist  
 Our Young Chefs  
 Pete's Apizza  
 Relay Foods  
 RW Restaurant Group  
 The Jim and Carol Trawick Foundation  
 Whole Foods Market  
 Takoma Park Vision  
 Velocity  
 YES: Your Edge for Success  
 Your Access Acupuncture  
 Zupnik, Chen & Zupnick, DDS, PA

## Advisory Board - 2014-2015

**Lisa Büttner**, BA (Engineering) and MA (Environmental Studies), Brown University; formerly employed at Winrock International doing rural and renewable energy project development, currently stay at home parent

**Karen Devitt**, BA (English), The College of William and Mary; Director and Co-Founder, Real Food for Kids – Montgomery and musical instruction and entertainment professional

**Caron Gremont**, MPP (Master of Public Policy), Johns Hopkins University; Senior Director, Healthy Eating, Martha's Table

**Edward Guss**, BS ( Business Administration), Seton Hall University, MPA, University of Maryland, post graduate Fellowship at Woodrow Wilson School, Princeton University. Retired from 20 years in Senior Executive Service with the federal government, including posts as Director of Management Sciences at the US Department of Energy and Deputy Executive Director of the US Savings Bonds for the Department of the Treasury and retired from teaching as Adjunct Associate Professor at the University of Maryland University College

**Marla Hollander**, MPH (Master of Public Health), Emory University; National Partnership Manager, American Heart Association

**George Leventhal**, MPA (Master of Public Administration), Johns Hopkins University; President, Montgomery County Council

**Monica Medrek**, Certified Health Coach and Wellness Counselor, Institute of Integrative Nutrition; Founder, Healthy Living Happy Life LLC

**Lindsey Parsons**, EdD (Doctor of Education), Griffith University; MA (Romance Linguistics), University of Texas at Austin; Executive Director, Real Food for Kids - Montgomery

**Aura Triana**, BA (Communication and Journalism); English-Spanish Translator, International Baccalaureate

**Jane Welna**, BA, Carleton College; Director of Development, Center for Science in the Public Interest

### Real Food for Kids - Montgomery

7979 Old Georgetown Rd., 10th Floor, Bethesda, MD 20814

(301) 202-4812

realfoodforkidsmontgomery.org

realfoodmcps@gmail.com

*Real Food for Kids - Montgomery is a project of the Chesapeake Institute for Local Sustainable Food and Agriculture, a 501(c)(3) organization.*

## Staff 2014-2015

### Staff

**Karen Devitt**, Director

**Lindsey Parsons**, Executive Director

### Interns

**Andrea Bauguess**, Digital Media and Communications, Fall 2014-Spring 2015

**Carol Conroy**, Fundraising and Development, Summer-Fall 2014

**Stephanie Estevez**, Policy, Strategy and Advocacy, Fall 2014

**Nick Gregory**, Policy, Strategy and Advocacy, Summer 2014

**Amanda Gurley**, School Nutrition Outreach, Fall 2014

*"I am a teacher and parent in MCPS. Attention and concentration improves with a well-balanced diet."*

*- an MCPS teacher and parent*

*"There are many low-income families who rely on MCPS to provide up to two meals per day to their children. We need to provide them with healthy, nutritious food to help them avoid childhood obesity and to provide the best nutrients for their learning. Please help to limit their sugar intake by reducing a la carte choices that are high in added sugar."*

*- an RFKM Supporter*