

Hawken Partners with Cleveland Clinic to Promote Wellness

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Kids: Instead of French fries, try a side of carrot raisin salad. Trade that ice cream for some fruit cocktail. And parents, be patient and cover your ears for just a short while. Because according to Cindy Moore, Director of Nutrition Therapy at the Cleveland Clinic, it can take somewhere between 8 and 15 times of introducing a food before a child will start to accept it. But the long-term effects of making good choices about what we put into our bodies appear to be well worth the effort. Students on the Lyndhurst campus know what healthy food tastes like: different - at least at first. They know because the School, along with its food service provider Aladdin Food Management Services, began partnering with the Cleveland Clinic in the spring of 2007 to review the food offerings for our Lower and Middle School students. The program, funded by Dr. and Mrs. Ronald Ross, past Hawken parents and current grandparents, was launched in an effort to find that delicate balance between food that is nutritious and food that tastes good. The formula is simple, and you've probably heard it before: cut down on sodium, trans-fats, and carbohydrates, and increase fiber intake. "I hear it all started with a corn dog," Head of School Scott Looney, whose tenure commenced soon after these conversations about nutrition began, told a group of parents who attended a November Parents' Association meeting that included representatives from Aladdin and the Cleveland Clinic. Mr. Looney is a strong proponent of the program, not only because of the projected health implications but because of the role nutrition plays in student learning, productivity, and knowledge retention. He considers developing an awareness of the choices we make regarding food and the consequences of those choices "a key component of education." Dr. Michael Rozien, Chief Wellness Officer at the Cleveland Clinic and guest on both *The Today Show* and *Oprah Winfrey Show*, agrees wholeheartedly. Dr. Rozien prepared a special [DVD presentation](#) for the Hawken community in which he highlights the correlation between obesity and chronic disease, psychological illness, and academic performance. "We've gotten fatter," he states, adding that beyond the health risks, this issue costs the nation so much money in health care that it compromises our ability to be competitive with our healthier European and Asian counterparts. After running numerous weeks of trial menus and soliciting student and parent feedback earlier this fall, the committee reconvened to review the results. Overall, the comments were very positive, and the constructive criticism was helpful in determining what changes could and should be made. Among the changes proposed were varying the selection of breads and cheeses offered and, for the sake of variety, adding special selections to the menu on at least a weekly basis. Peter Anagnostos, a Hawken parent who has championed this program since its inception, praised the generosity and vision of the Ross family for their funding of the program as well as the cooperative efforts of the Hawken community, Aladdin Food Management Services, and the Cleveland Clinic. He added that there is further "magic" in the consistency of the message that students receive from the classroom to the dining room, highlighting yet another example of Hawken's focus on experiential learning. While Scott Looney told parents that he "can't promise there will never be another corn dog on either of our campuses," he is pleased that the School is addressing this important topic in a thoughtful and scientific way. All partners in the venture agree that the program is a "work in progress" and that the changes will take some time, but everyone is committed to making it a priority.