



# School Pesticide Monitor

A Bi-Monthly Bulletin on Pesticides and Alternatives  
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## School Chooses Organic Company for Healthy, Affordable Lunches

**W**ith skyrocketing rates of childhood obesity and the recent declaration that pizza can be considered a vegetable, public school lunches have come under fire for inadequately nourishing our nation's children. Horror stories about highly processed, pre-packaged food that is reheated in kitchen-less cafeterias are everywhere. However, some communities are taking matters into their own hands, joining the ever-growing organic movement to provide their students fresh, healthy food.

Niles Township High School Dis-

trict 219 in Skokie Illinois is one of the latest models for affordable, healthy and ecologically sound school lunches. It began with a student petition for better lunch, and with the town's changing demographics and a willing school board, a massive overhaul of the lunch program began this year with the help of a Chicago company called OrganicLife.

According to the *Chicago Tribune*, poverty rates in the district grew from 16 percent in 2007 to 31 percent this year. This was the first time in decades that the school district took part in the National School

lunch Program, which provides federal funding in exchange for meeting certain meal requirements.

The company took over from Aramark food services back in August, and serves sustainable, local and organic food to 4,700 students at Niles North and Niles West high schools every day.

OrganicLife co-founder Justin Rolls says that the company makes it work by buying high-quality items in bulk, cooking economically from scratch, boosting sales through better tasting food, and taking slimmer

...continued on reverse

## Free IPM Webinar on How to Prevent Pesticide Exposure in Schools

**T**o promote a national framework for the prevention of chemical incidents in schools, Interstate Chemical Threats Workgroup (ICTW) has teamed up with the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) to bring you a series of webinars that explore policies to reduce exposures to chemicals in schools.

Beyond Pesticides participated in the third of four webinars, *Effective Policies to Reduce Exposures to Pesticides in Schools* which was recorded on December 15th. Go

to the link below to learn about reducing and eliminating pesticide use in schools and the need for a more precautionary approach.

In this webinar you'll hear about which states have enacted policies to reduce pesticide use in schools, the types of pesticide incidents seen in California school settings, EPA's School Integrated Pest Management (IPM) program, and the need for a more precautionary approach.

Presenters include:

- Janet Hurley, School IPM Program Specialist, Texas;
- Michel Oriel, Research Scientist, CA Department of Pesticide Regulation;
- Sherry Glick, National School IPM Expert, US EPA;
- Jay Feldman, Executive Director, Beyond Pesticides.

To download the webinar, go to:  
<http://bit.ly/IPMwebinar>

Follow the instructions on the screen to download and view the free presentation.

## Organic Lunch

...continued from reverse profits as part of the business plan.

In it's spring bid to the district, the company offered to deliver healthier lunches at just \$1.24 per meal. The organic meals are provided free for students from families with low-income or sold for \$2.25 at most. A la cart items sold separately.

To participate in the National School Lunch Program, the school's cafeteria must offer seven to ten complete lunches each day that can be served free or for 40 cents to 1,200 low-income students. Others may purchase the meal for \$2.25 or pay extra for a la carte items or more elaborate lunches.

Since its arrival, OrganicLife has boosted lunch sales among the district's qualifying students to 85%, yielding reimbursements of \$2.77 per meal from the federal government.

Most students interviewed by *The Tribune* praised the new food. "This is a lot tastier than before," said a sophomore student.

School districts across the country, including Seattle public schools, and California school districts in Berkeley, Santa Monica, and Palo Alto, already have policies banning junk food and encouraging organic food in school cafeterias. The San Francisco Unified School District and the River Valley School District in Wisconsin, have passed school board reso-

lutions to source only rBGH free milk in their schools due to parents' demands. And an organic salad bar started at Lincoln Elementary School in Olympia, Washington has proven so popular and economically feasible; all grade schools in Olympia now have one.

Children who eat a diet of organic food show a level of pesticides in their body that is six times lower than children who eat a diet of conventionally produced food. A study from Emory University found that an organic diet given to children provides a "dramatic and immediate protective effect" against exposures to two pesticides that are commonly used in U.S. agricultural production.

Beyond Pesticides advocates for

## Get your school to go organic!

How can you start your own program? Here are a few simple tips on how to go organic in school without going over budget:

1. Eliminate dessert.
2. Encourage your school to partner with local farmers or organic community gardens.
3. Look at existing successful models. Some school districts in California, Wisconsin and New York have been successful in getting organic lunch programs started. Resources to help you out are listed below!

organically grown and local food whenever possible. Organic farming protects the local environment, waterways, air quality, and the farmworkers and their families from chemicals that have been shown to cause a myriad of chronic health effects.

## Helpful online tools to convert your school's cafeteria:

**The Organic School Project** reconnects school children to their food source through organic gardening, wellness education and healthy eating. They have encouraged healthy lifestyles for over 3,500 kids and thousands of families since its founding in 2005 and are continuing to improve the ways in which children interact with, think about and consume food. <http://www.organicschoolproject.org/>

**The Lunch Box** is a web tool launched by Chef Ann Cooper to help schools throughout the country focus on organic and locally grown food. The website is a portal of tangible tools and practical solutions for school nutrition officials and children's health advocates across the U.S. It is a first-of-its-kind school nutrition resource with a comprehensive set of "why" and "how to" online tools to transition the typical highly processed school meal program to healthier, wholesome and fresh food-based menus with no trans fats, high fructose corn syrup or unnecessary chemical additives and preservatives. <http://www.thelunchbox.org/>

**Sustainable Table** has an incredible guide on healthy school lunches. It covers all the basics, including the National School Lunch Program, how communities are taking back the school lunch, and how to help you join in the growing movement of sustainable food at school. See the guide at: <http://www.sustainabletable.org/features/articles/backtoschool/>