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La Petite Academy launches new food menu to help children develop healthy eating habits in a world of expanding waistlines

CHICAGO, IL (Dec. 4, 2006) – In today’s time-crunched society more and more parents are resorting to the drive-thru for a quick, sometimes not so nutritious meal. That’s a trend that has La Petite Academy, one of the nation’s largest privately held early care and education companies, concerned as the waistlines of America’s youngest children continue to expand.

With its own team of nutritional experts, La Petite Academy is making a concerted effort at its 650 academies nationwide to break this alarming trend by incorporating more healthy food choices into its food menu not traditionally served at child care centers. See www.lapetite.com. Their goal: To help promote lifelong healthy eating habits among its students.

“We have made a commitment to provide our parents a safe, clean, healthy educational environment for their children so they can learn, prosper and grow,” said Nicole Spain, a registered dietitian and Lead Administrator of La Petite Academy’s Child and Adult Care Food Program. “Providing students with a well-balanced, nutritious meal is a big part of that.”

La Petite Academy has partnered with Sysco Foods Service to supply its academies with healthy foods including brown rice, lean meats, whole grain breads, cereals, and a wide range of fruits and vegetables. These foods have been added to La Petite’s already healthy food menu, which is hand selected by La Petite Academy’s team of registered dietitians.

The new menu is in sharp contrast to foods traditionally served at child care centers including sugar-based cereals, chips, corn dogs and bologna.

“If children learn to eat hot dogs and fried potatoes, that’s what they’ll want and ask for,” says Margaret Briley, a professor in the Nutritional Sciences Department at The University of Texas at Austin who has been studying nutrition and child care for the past 20 years. “A child’s nutrition is ultimately in the hands of parents, schools and child care providers.”

At La Petite Academy parents can expect students to be served a well-balanced, nutritious meal that might include fresh or canned fruits along with a bowl of whole grain cereal and reduced fat milk. For lunch, students may be offered a turkey and cheese sandwich served on wheat bread, a side of fruit and vegetables, and reduced fat milk.

In between meals, students are offered items such as yogurt, whole grain crackers and muffins during snack time. All snacks are served with 100 percent fruit juice, reduced fat milk or water.

“Providing students healthy, nutritious meals starts at La Petite, and we hope they will continue these healthy habits outside our academies and later in life,” Spain said.

La Petite Academy offers a variety of programs: from infants to toddlers; two-year-olds to preschoolers; as well as kindergarteners to school age children. For more information, visit www.lapetite.com.

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