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Chicago Public School Student-Chefs Treat Congress to Chicken Raised without Antibiotics

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WASHINGTON, May 10, 2012 -- /PRNewswire-USNewswire/ -- Six high school students from the Chicago Vocational Career Academy today will serve Congress a lunch that features chicken raised without antibiotics, just like much of the chicken now on the menu in public schools back home. They are representing the Windy City in the Healthy Schools Campaign's Cooking up Change® competition among fellow students from across the United States. A healthy twist on a southern classic, their meal of oven-"fried" chicken with greens, cabbage, and sweet potato salad was produced for about one dollar per meal and in compliance with Chicago Public Schools' strict nutritional guidelines. It will be on the menu at cafeterias serving Congress and offered for tasting at a Congressional briefing.

Last November, Chicago Public Schools put scratch-cooked, unprocessed chicken raised without antibiotics on the lunch menu at 473 elementary and secondary schools. The district's pioneering purchase of 1.2 million pounds of locally-grown fresh drumsticks was made in recognition of the danger that the overuse of antibiotics in livestock production poses to public health and to children in particular.

"Cooking up Change helps students develop and use many skills," said Rochelle Davis, founder of Healthy Schools Campaign. "They learn about teamwork, planning, healthy eating, and working with a tight budget. This year, they're also learning how some farming practices affect the public's health and how we as consumers can encourage poultry producers to use antibiotics responsibly."

"We are beaming with joy for these smart young men and women," said Annie Lionberger, Manager of Health and Wellness Promotion, Chicago Public Schools. "I have been lucky enough to dine on this delicious meal, so I know our Cavaliers of CVCA will continue to make us proud."

"Healthy eating is important to me because it provides your body with the things it needs to function better," said Kaliah H., one of the members of the award-winning team of student-chefs at CVCA. "I look at school food more positively."

School Food FOCUS and the Pew Campaign on Human Health and Industrial Farming partnered with Chartwells-Thompson Hospitality (CPS' primary food service provider), Healthy Schools Campaign, Whole Foods, and Chicago Public Schools' purchase from Miller Amish Country Poultry of Orland, Indiana. They are now working to help other school systems make similar purchases.

"These students can teach all of us an important lesson about protecting public health for future generations," said Laura Stanley, Learning Lab Manager at School Food FOCUS. "We're inspired by their confidence, talent, and commitment to this cause, and we are honored to have them working with us."

"Our future health depends on using antibiotics conservatively, but some of the largest meat and poultry producers are overusing these drugs," said Laura Rogers, director of the Pew Campaign on Human Health and Industrial Farming. "We are grateful to Chicago Public Schools and the talented young students of CVCA for encouraging responsible meat and poultry production."

Eighty percent of U.S. antibiotics are sold for food animal production purposes. Most of these drugs are used not to treat sick animals, but to make healthy livestock grow faster and to compensate for unsanitary and overcrowded conditions. These practices are contributing to the emergence of antibiotic-resistant bacteria that can make people sick.

About Healthy Schools Campaign

Healthy Schools Campaign is a leading authority on healthy school environments and a voice for people who care about our environment, our children, and education. HSC advocates for policies and practices that allow all students, teachers and staff to learn and work in a healthy school environment. HSC presents the Cooking up Change healthy cooking contest, which challenges high school culinary students to create a healthy school meal on a tight budget, as a way to bring together great food with an important message about the future of school meals. Cooking up Change embodies HSC's core values of empowering stakeholders, addressing the growing health disparities our country faces and making the critical connection between student health and learning. Learn more at www.healthyschoolscampaign.org.

About the Pew Health Group

The Pew Health Group is the health and consumer-product safety arm of The Pew Charitable Trusts, a nonprofit organization that applies a rigorous, analytical approach to improve public policy, inform the public and stimulate civic life. www.pewtrusts.org/health

About School Food FOCUS

School Food FOCUS is a national collaborative that leverages the knowledge and procurement power of over 30 of the country's largest school districts to make school meals nationwide more healthful, regionally sourced, and sustainably produced. FOCUS aims to transform food systems to support students' academic achievement and lifelong health, while directly benefiting farmers, regional economies, and the environment. School Food FOCUS is a program of Public Health Solutions and is supported by generous funding from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, the Kresge Foundation, and a growing

number of sponsors, individuals, and private funders. Please visit www.schoolfoodfocus.org and www.healthsolutions.org for more information.

About Chartwells School Dining Services

Chartwells, a division of Charlotte, NC-based Compass Group provides dining services for over 550 public school districts and private schools, comprising over 6,000 separate elementary, middle and high schools nationwide. For more information about Chartwells School Dining Services, visit www.eatlearnlive.com.

About Thompson Hospitality

With over \$410 million in revenue and 4,000 employees, Thompson Hospitality is one of the largest minority owned businesses in the United States and the largest minority owned foodservice company in the world. For more information about Thompson Hospitality, visit www.thompsonhospitality.com.

About Chicago Public Schools

The Chicago Public Schools serves approximately 405,000 students in more than 675 schools. It is the nation's third-largest school system.

SOURCE Healthy Schools Campaign