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Students Vote for “President of School Lunch” in National Election, Learn About Making Healthy Choices

***Larry Lasagna, Petunia Pita Pocket, and Pete Pizza among Candidates Vying for Title
after National School Lunch Week: Oct. 13-17***

August 2008, Alexandria, VA – The non-profit School Nutrition Association (SNA) invites students nationwide to cast their ballot and participate in this year’s ‘Vote for School Lunch’ campaign to learn more about healthy meal choices at school. Marking the final round of lunchroom elections in the three-year national campaign, this year’s candidates include *Petunia Pita Pocket, Pete Pizza, Gloria Grilled Cheese, Larry Lasagna* and *Biff Burger*.

The candidates are campaigning on their platform of sound dietary values, great taste and lunchroom versatility to be announced 'President of School Lunch' on Friday, October 24, 2008. Now through National School Lunch Week, October 13-17, Students can learn more about candidates and cast their vote in school cafeterias or online, at www.VoteForSchoolLunch.org.

The third and final year of the "Vote for School Lunch" program features a heated battle between candidates Pete Pizza, winner of the first-ever election in 2006; Biff Burger, winner of the 2007 fall election; and three new contenders that were designed and submitted by students: Gloria Grilled Cheese, Larry Lasagna and Petunia Pita Pocket. Each candidate will relay the nutritional benefits of their school meal versions as well as their physical fitness and extra curricular activities.

The campaign will help educate students and parents about healthy food choices and encourage them to partake in physical fitness activities. Providing an interactive opportunity to learn about healthy meal choices at school, Vote campaign activities include debates, contests and cafeteria elections. Hundreds of thousands of students have participated since the program began in 2006.

The campaign will be supported by incentive giveaways such as signs, buttons, stickers, mugs, t-shirts and hats during National School Lunch Week (NSLW). Additional programs can include:

- Election day: schools set up voting booths and establish a voting day
- Costume contests: students and staff create fun costumes and dress up as their favorite characters.
- Cafeteria debates: members of the student government represent each candidate
- Essay contests: invent a Cafeteria Bill of Rights or amend the Cafeteria Constitution
- Recipe write-ins: solicit entries for creative versions of each candidate
- Media campaigns: Get school paper/broadcast journalism department to “follow the campaign trail”

SNA's nationwide membership of 55,000 school nutrition professionals work in schools and in communities to provide balanced, nutritious school meals and information on proper portion sizes and nutrition education for children.

Within the federally funded National School Lunch Program:

- Nationwide, 95% of schools participate and over 30 million children are served daily
- Dietary guidelines dictate no more than 30 percent of calories can come from fat and less than 10 percent from saturated fat
- Over the course of one week, lunches must provide 1/3 of the Recommended Dietary Allowances of protein, Vitamin A, Vitamin C, iron, calcium and calories
- Well-balanced school lunches include protein, fruits and vegetables, grains and low-fat milk and are served in age-appropriate portions

Signed into law by President Harry Truman in 1946, the National School Lunch Program provides nutritionally balanced low-cost and free meals to students. Since then school meals have evolved into balanced, nutritious options for students. According to the "State of School Nutrition 2007" report, school nutrition programs have introduced students to more fresh fruits and vegetables, lean meats, whole grains and low-fat and reduced sugar food varieties. Today, a majority of schools offer fat-free milk, salad bars or prepackaged salads, low-fat yogurt and yogurt drinks, from-scratch baked items and even vegetarian meals.

National School Lunch Week was established in 1963 by a proclamation from President John F. Kennedy. It is designed to help raise awareness for the important role that school nutrition programs play in the lives of America's children. Each year, the School Nutrition Association helps schools celebrate NSLW with an official theme, suggested menus and recipes, promotional resources, activity sheets, decoration ideas and more.

About School Nutrition Association:

The School Nutrition Association (SNA), www.schoolnutrition.org, is a national, non-profit professional organization representing more than 55,000 members who provide high-quality, low-cost meals to students across the country. The Association and its members are dedicated to feeding children safe and nutritious meals. Founded in 1946, SNA is the only association devoted exclusively to protecting and enhancing children's health and well being through school meals and sound nutrition education.

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