

Hello Everyone,

Wintertime in New England! As Rhode Island children head to school bundled up in hats and mittens (wishing every day for lots of snow!), let's help keep them warm and healthy by continuing our efforts to feed and fill them with nutritious foods!

As the Rhode Island farms growing season comes to a close, I remind our School Food Service Directors that RI potatoes, apples, winter squash and a few other harvest goodies are still available, so please check with your local farmer or produce distributor. Sincerest thanks to everyone who participated in the RI Farm to School Project this 2008 harvest year! Nearly every RI school district (we're still counting!) was able to feature a RI grown food or drink in their meal program with many school districts making repeat purchases. Harvest celebrations took place in many school districts this fall and RI school kids had the opportunity to eat the freshest and tastiest corn, tomatoes, winter squash, zucchini, apples, peaches, plums, potatoes, broccoli and cider available to them.

Farm to School is a project that benefits everyone in the state. It builds financial viability for our farms, thus preserving farmland and open space, it keeps food dollars spent by RI school districts in RI and it contributes to the improved nutrition of our children. We are committed to connecting RI schools with RI farms. Someday we hope Rhody Fresh milk, another RI farm product, will be available in all of our public schools.

This winter, I encourage school and parent groups to schedule a Kids First Wellness Workshop. Since every Workshop is tailored for your group's needs, we promise it will be interactive, hands-on, educational and fun. Let our team of Kids First Professionals help educate your school district on recent nutrition laws and regulations, healthy fundraising ideas, food safety and food allergy issues, or ways to incorporate more physical fitness into your routines.

In addition to Workshops, Kids First offers personalized support to RI Health & Wellness Committees through our Healthy School Coordinators Karin Wetherill and Carole Toselli. We can help your H&W Committee with parent outreach, staff wellness education, H&W policy implementation and innovative ideas to enable positive change in your district. If your H&W Committee has something to share, contact us about posting your ideas, tips, or meeting minutes

to our web site to help others. Please visit the H&W Committee section to learn more.

Finally, I hope everyone has taken time to explore the features of our re-designed web site - just launched this school year! In addition to workshop descriptions and dates, recent press coverage of healthy school events in RI and contact information for our staff and Board members, our web site also offers helpful handouts regarding the Snack Law and the RI Nutritional Requirements (RINR).

I welcome your suggestions for improving our web site to make it an even better tool for everyone working on creating healthier and more nutritious environments for our Rhode Island children. I also welcome your comments and suggestions for our workshops and other activities in the schools. It takes all of us working together to make a positive and lasting nutritional difference in the lives of children.

Dress warmly & stay healthy!