



Contact: Kathy Blake
Lewis & Neale for the
U.S. Highbush Blueberry Council
646-218-6019
kathy@lewis-neale.com

For immediate release

BLUEBERRY COUNCIL'S "2012 LITTLE BLUE DYNAMO HEALTH HALO AWARD" Highlights Innovative Ways Students Get Hooked on Healthy Food

It's not enough to simply prepare fresh, nutritious food and present it to kids in their school cafeterias. It takes a creative child nutrition department to develop a program that makes healthy food really cool and attractive to their young, opinionated customers.

In the **2012 Little Blue Dynamamos Health Halo Award**, the U.S. Highbush Blueberry Council (USHBC) asked schools to demonstrate how they incorporate fruits and vegetables into their menus and help children learn about how diet and exercise can support better health.

The winner, the Child Nutrition Department of Fayette County (KY) Public Schools (FCPS), was awarded the prize for a standout program, "Connect the Dots." Marty Flynn, SNS, the FCPS district coordinator, submitted the program that was designed by Monica Fowler, RD, during her internship with FCPS.

Based on the color-coded plate graphic from the USDA MyPlate, the winning "Connect the Dots" program relates those colors to five food groups: grains (yellow), vegetables (green), fruits (red), milk (blue) and meat/alternatives (purple). While school lunch must contain three of those components, it can contain all five. "Connect the Dots" encourages students to select a food identified with each of the five colors.



The prize for the **2012 Little Blue Dynamamos Health Halo Award** is an all-expenses-paid trip for two to the School Nutrition Association's 2012 Annual National Conference in Denver, a \$2,500 value.

"The 'Connect the Dots' program is fun and colorful and simplifies food choices for children, while teaching them a system for creating a balanced diet," says Ms. Flynn. "What they learn in the cafeteria, the children take with them."

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Other impressive entries to the **2012 Little Blue Dynamos Health Halo Award** contest included that of Newton, CT, Public Schools. Director of Dining Services Dan Shields, with resident dietitian Jill Patterson, RD, dietetic intern Cora Ragaini, and others, manage a wide range of programs and activities for kids and their families. "Taste Testing Fairs" for middle school kids use "peer power," with older kids encouraging younger ones to taste healthy foods, such as dairy smoothies, fruit salads, snap peas and brown rice. Students are also put in charge of leading break-dance physical activities during the fairs.

Catherine Gerard, Food & Nutrition Supervisor for Pinellas County, FL, Public Schools, entered the **2012 Little Blue Dynamos Health Halo Award** contest with a program that promotes fruits and vegetables to the 101,000 students who participate in the school lunch program there. A different fruit or vegetable is featured every month with recipes that highlight the special item. Students there have been introduced to such exotics as kiwi, purple sweet potatoes and avocados, and with the purchase of a full meal can have all the fruit and vegetables they would like. When possible, produce for the monthly specials is procured from local growers.

"We're impressed with the creativity and enthusiasm that school foodservice departments all over the country put into their programs to teach their student-customers about leading healthy lives and making good food choices," says Mark Villata, Executive Director of the USHBC.

The USHBC consists of growers and packers in North and South America who market their blueberries in the United States. The members of the USHBC work together to promote the growth and wellbeing of the entire industry. The blueberry industry is committed to providing blueberries that are grown, harvested, packed and shipped in clean, safe environments.

Learn more about FCSP's "Connect the Dots" program at <http://www.blueberrycouncil.org/foodservice/school-foodservice/2012-health-halo-award> or contact Marty Flynn at marty.flynn@fayette.kyschools.us.

For more information about Little Blue Dynamos and the USHBC, please visit www.LittleBlueDynamos.com or contact Kathy Blake at Kathy@Lewis-Neale.com or 646-218-6019.

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