

Taste Test

– By Janice Llanes Fabry –

Rye Neck Middle School students sunk their teeth into a “Fear Factor Tasting” lunchtime program March 19. Fifth through eighth graders dared to taste nutritious foods they have probably spent many a dinner hour avoiding. PTSA Middle School Vice President Arjan Eenkema van Dijk explained, “A program like this benefits the students by giving them the opportunity to experience some fruits and vegetables they have not enjoyed before. It reinforces the concept that they are healthy for you and because the event was executed in a light-hearted, fun atmosphere, the students could relate to it.”



The event also included a family recipe contest that celebrated family traditions as well as nutrition. Participants presented their favorite recipes, while Principal Eric Lutinski and Rye Neck Food Service Director Stacey Falcone chose the winners. Falcone will feature the winners’ selections in the school’s dining hall menu to be tasted by all. This month’s menu will feature the Italian pasta e fagioli of Fei McMahon’s family and a Mexican lip puckerer from Joseph Rodriguez. The family recipes of fellow students Nikki Napolitani and Alyssa Vinzons will be featured in May.

Some of the “Fear Factor Tasting” foods introduced that afternoon were papaya, plantains, edamame, spaghetti squash and artichokes. Students were given a sampling, as well as the origins and nutrition benefits of each. They discovered that these fruits and vegetables are low in saturated fat and rich in vitamins, minerals and dietary fiber. Adventurous and hungry, the students valiantly participated in the taste tests and enjoyed comparing notes with one another.

“Middle School is a time when students have more freedom in the choices they make about the foods they eat and I believe emphasizing the benefits of healthy eating is especially beneficial for this age group,” said van Dijk, who initiated the Middle School Health and Wellness Committee dedicated solely to middle school students.

The PTSA-sponsored program was organized by Health and Wellness Committee Chair and registered dietitian Michelle Jackson and committee member Katie Moore, with the help of Stacey Falcone. Rye Neck parents Maria Vinzons and Christina Piliero were on hand to serve and Cathy DeCrescenzo provided a recipe booklet.