

## St. Leo the Great showcases fresh fruits and veggies

"I'll try some of that."

"Yes, I'd like some olives."

"I didn't know there were black grapes."

Students at St. Leo the Great, a private Catholic school in Lancaster County, were excited about the week-long tasting of fresh fruits and vegetables held daily during the lunch hour. The tasting was part of Go for the Greens, a statewide program of the Penn State Hershey Center for Nutrition and Activity Promotion (Center).

The fresh fruit and vegetable bar was organized by the school's wellness committee and led by parent volunteers Lynne Zanowski and JoAnn Ott-Slenker. To help reinforce the message of the tastings – incorporating fruits and vegetables into meals and snacks – the wellness committee also hosted a Produce Pentathlon and encouraged each student in the school to eat five or more servings of fruits and vegetables per day for five days.

St. Leo the Great's Go for the Greens celebration kicked off on Monday, March 16 with a visit by the wellness committee to each classroom to introduce the Pentathlon and promote the lunchtime tastings. In addition, students involved in the school's wellness committee created "point of sale" posters that hung in the cafeteria behind the fruit and vegetable bar.

Throughout the week, students were introduced to a wide array of fruits and vegetables including carrot coins; broccoli flowerets; sugar snap peas; cucumbers; sliced green, red and yellow sweet peppers; celery; black olives; grape tomatoes; pineapple; strawberries; watermelon; raisins; bananas; kiwi; green, purple and black grapes; dried apricots; bananas; apples; and oranges.

"Every day we tried to provide students with a rainbow of fruit and vegetable samples," said Ott-Slenker. "From the feedback we've received from parents, it's obvious the kids are sharing their new likes – and dislikes – at home too."

Kegel's Produce, based in Lancaster, Pa., worked with the school to provide the daily fresh fruit and vegetable samplings. "Our goal from the beginning was to put together a cost-effective program," remarked Deb Brooks, school account manager, "we were very pleased that some of our vendors were willing to help us by providing discounts on their product."

It's undeniable that the event was a huge success.

"We've received numerous e-mails from parents who are extremely pleased with the fresh fruit and vegetable offerings," remarked Zanowski, "in fact; both the school's principal and several parents have offered to assist with funds to make sure the fresh fruit and vegetable bar can happen more than once next school year."

Go for the Greens is an annual program led by the Center. During the 2007/2008 school year, 790 schools engaged 418,700 students in Go for the Greens activities such as taste-testings, trivia contests, lunch menu offerings featuring green vegetables, recipe competitions and many other produce-based games and activities.