



# UNIVERSITY TIMES

The Faculty & Staff Newspaper  
Since 1968

- 🔗 Advertising
- 🔗 Back Issues
- 🔗 Contact Us
- 🔗 Deadlines
- 🔗 Find a Copy

 

### Subscribe to UTDIRECT

Your name:

Your e-mail:

**NEWS**  
**Got News?**  
Tell us about newsworthy people, programs, and events at Pitt.

**Books, Journals, & More**  
Submission Form

SEPTEMBER 1, 2011

## Healthier lunches coming to Oakland

Healthier lunches will be getting a higher profile through the Oakland Business Improvement District (OBID) "Eat Smart! Eat Here!" promotion.

The initiative, which will be rolled out later this month, will highlight restaurants that offer healthful menu items and specials, said OBID executive director Georgia Petropoulos Muir. Eat Smart! Eat Here! is part of a larger initiative to encourage healthier living, funded through the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Action Communities for Health, Innovation and Environmental Change (ACHIEVE) grant program.

Partners in the ACHIEVE effort include the School of Nursing, the Allegheny County Health Department and the five organizations that comprise the Oakland Neighborhood Partnership (OBID, Oakland Transportation Management Association, Community Human Services, Oakland Community Council and People's Oakland).

Other aspects of ACHIEVE focus on encouraging healthful activities among Oakland residents, but Eat Smart! Eat Here! aims more for the lunchtime restaurant clientele — predominantly Pitt and Carnegie Mellon students, faculty and staff and UPMC employees.

Eat Smart! Eat Here! restaurants will be designated with window decals and listed on a map that will be distributed later this month. Details will be posted on the Eat Smart! Eat Here! link at [www.onlyinoakland.org](http://www.onlyinoakland.org).

Graduate students in Pitt nursing faculty member Heidi Donovan's health promotion course have helped shape the initiative. Earlier this year they surveyed 15 local restaurants and food-oriented businesses to gauge their interest in offering healthier options. They then brainstormed ideas, several of which are being incorporated into the ACHIEVE initiative.

Among the ideas was to promote chefs from Oakland restaurants through appearances at the weekly farmers' market, in addition to devising the promotional campaign that will recognize businesses for their commitment to offering smarter food choices.

The survey asked about current healthy food options and business owners' perception of customers' demand for them. Responses were mixed.

"Those who see themselves as healthy restaurants really feel like they are responding to a demand for nutritious and convenient food," Donovan said. "They are hearing from people that they want more convenient, quick, nutritious food. Fast-food restaurants think that people don't come into their restaurants looking for healthy food. The bars in town — when people come in, they're looking for munchies and food to go with their beers."

Most of those surveyed had some level of interest in tapping into the healthy food movement and were thinking of changes such as reducing salt, using healthier oils, steaming foods or cutting portion sizes, she said.

In some cases, healthful dining is part of a restaurant's business plan — such as at the Red Oak Café, which emphasizes organic and local foods, said Muir. In other cases, the prospect of tapping into a new potential customer base appealed to owners' business sense. Some restaurants already had healthful menu items that incorporated fresh vegetables, grilled dishes or low-salt/low-fat items, but they hadn't specifically promoted them, she said.

Several restaurant operators got some advice from Britney Beatrice, a Pitt graduate student in dietetics who also has been working with Community Human Services to incorporate healthier dining options there.

She visited five restaurants to make recommendations on incorporating small menu changes that wouldn't require them to develop a completely new menu.

One chain sandwich shop had little leeway to make changes, but she suggested it could emphasize its healthiest options in its advertising. For an Italian restaurant, she suggested introducing whole-wheat pizza crust and pastas, or using part-skim provolone and ricotta cheeses. Indian



dishes could be reduced in fat by replacing heavy cream with evaporated skim milk or low-fat half-and-half and cutting back on the amount of oil used in cooking.

Even healthful options such as salads could be boosted by serving dressings on the side and offering low-fat or fat-free dressing choices. She also suggested adding proteins such as chickpeas, nuts or beans to green salads to make them a more filling meal option.

In the ice-cream shop, Beatrice suggested creating “reverse sundaes” with more fruit and less ice cream, or using fruit, pretzels or graham crackers instead of chocolate-based toppings, she said. For people who can’t resist ordering a double-dip, making at least one scoop low-fat or low-sugar is an improvement.

Beatrice suggested that restaurant patrons choose dishes with lots of vegetables in order to feel satisfied. Filling up on a salad then taking home a portion of the entrée is another good strategy, she said. Dining at a restaurant that offers healthy options is a good start, “but the choices people make matter more,” she said.

Muir said she hopes additional restaurants will join in the Eat Smart! Eat Here! promotion, adding that OBID may revisit the idea of promoting an inexpensive healthy lunch special similar to the popular \$5 lunch deals offered last January by some Oakland restaurants.

—**Kimberly K. Barlow**

Filed under: [Feature](#), [Volume 44 Issue 1](#)

[✉ Email This Post](#)