

## The 'New' Malnourishment

Up until the recent past, malnourishment was defined as a child not having enough food to develop or function normally. In the past couple of decades however, the definition of malnourishment has changed as there has been a realization that a child can actually be malnourished in two ways; by being undernourished, meaning not having enough food to subsist on, and also by being truly malnourished - having plenty to eat but not eating foods that provide adequate nourishment for growth. Children may consume enough calories, but often these calories are 'empty' calories, containing high levels of fat, sugar and sodium and lacking necessary vitamins, minerals and fiber.

Children of all ages and socioeconomic levels are at risk for malnourishment. Busy morning routines, working parents and hectic calendars can result in children being left on their own for meals and snacks more often, which can potentially lead to fast food or convenience food options that limit their intake of necessary nutrients.

The Ontario government is moving in the right direction, eliminating pop and junk foods from school vending machines was the first step, followed by Bill 8, Healthy Food for Healthy schools, which eliminated products with trans-fats sold in cafeterias at our schools. Most recently the Policy/Program memorandum 150

that will be implemented in September 2011 outlines nutrition guidelines to be followed for optimum healthy food choices. We will then truly see a school environment contributing to improved education and health for all students.

Along with the Ministry of Education's above initiatives is the Ministry of Children and Youth Services (MCYS) support of Student Nutrition Programs (SNPs). Locally Halton Food for Thought is the sole non-profit charitable agency to administer, oversee and sustain programs in Halton schools.

"We are just thrilled with the Ministry support" says Gayle Cruikshank, Executive Director of HFFT. "Back in 2005 we had only 36 programs running, today we support 126 programs in 91 of our Halton schools. Our student nutrition programs are unique, reflecting each school environment. We provide full breakfast programs, in-class snack programs, front hallway grab-and-go nutrition stations, delivery of food baskets to classes by senior students and volunteers, and packed lunches for students who routinely arrive at school without food.

"It is extremely important that our youth understand the importance of healthy eating for life-long good health" continues Cruikshank. The MCYS intention is to fund 15% of the schools' SNP budget and have

a community agency, such as HFFT, work together with the schools to ensure sustainability. While HFFT raises a substantial amount from community grants, corporate donations and fundraising they need community support to bridge the funding gap of \$127,000 for the 2010-11 school year.



There are many ways to become a HFFT Hero; volunteer in a program or on a sub-committee of the board of directors; donate money or in-kind food products; hold a 3<sup>rd</sup> party event to raise funds, (ie: a garage sale, a percentage of your company sales). It only costs \$140-\$165 to support one child for an entire school year to have breakfast five days a week. Together we can feed and educate our children and youth to ensure they have the right fuel for learning.

Visit [www.haltonfoodforthought.ca](http://www.haltonfoodforthought.ca) and join us in making the difference for thousands of students right here at home!