### Green Fields Fresh Lunch Program

Imagine a school cafeteria where students can choose from an assortment of vegetable salads, fresh fruits, hot vegetarian pasta dishes, and roast chicken, without a French fry or soda machine in sight. Imagine that the students themselves helped to prepare and serve these fresh, healthy lunches. Imagine that much of the food served in the cafeteria was organically grown, and, when possible, raised within 50 miles of the school.

This dream could become a reality thanks to the Green Fields Fresh Lunch Program. Funded by a grant from the National Alliance of Organic Farmers, and organized by concerned parents, Green Fields seeks to transform the lunches served at schools throughout the Tri-State area. The program director is Alison Jorgenson, an expert in childhood nutrition.

Our five-year plan is designed to gradually introduce students, parents and school district staff to the basic principles of fresh meal planning. The first year will feature a weekly salad bar at each school, with students alternating responsibility for preparing and stocking the salad bar offerings. In the second year, we will introduce one hot organic entrée per week, and continue the weekly salad bar. In years three through five we will continue to broaden the lunch options at each school. Throughout the program, we will work with school district staff to minimize the availability of unhealthy foods in campus vending machines.

# Kids Are What They Eat

Currently most school lunches are prepared at a central processing facility and shipped, pre-packaged, to area schools. Hot dogs, hamburgers, fried potato products and canned vegetables are a staple of school lunches in our elementary and middle schools. At area high schools, students are free to select from offerings that are no better than fast food in terms of their nutrition and calorie count. A typical high school student might consume a large serving of French fries and a slice of pepperoni pizza for lunch five days a week, washing it all down with an extra-large cola. The total fat, sugar and calories for such a meal could easily exceed the student’s nutritional allotment for an entire day.

As illustrated in this chart, the percentage of fresh fruits and vegetables served in area school lunches is shockingly low.

[Insert Excel chart]

The effects of the high fat, high salt, high sugar content of school lunches are well documented. The Centers for Disease Control, childhood obesity rates are rising dangerously, leaving our children at risk for hypertension, Type 2 diabetes and coronary heart disease.

# Budget

The following table, prepared by Zoe Rios, summarizes the budget for the first year of our program. A complete, five-year budget will be available soon.

[Insert Excel worksheet]

# Program Director

Alison Jorgenson, the program director for Green Fields, is a graduate of the School of Nutrition Science at Iowa State University. After graduation, she was hired as the Director of Food Services for the Greater Davenport School District. She has lectured widely on childhood nutrition and recently taught a series of classes at the Riverside Neighborhood Center entitled “Eating Right on the Go,” which focused on teaching busy parents how to prepare healthy family meals.