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Think Extreme Makeovers are Just for Home? Think again. Glenville-Emmons High School wins a \$40,000 lunch line makeover

Glenville, MN (January 26, 2009) – Diane Minear takes pride in making school meals fresh, healthy, and visually attractive. Yet when students at Glenville-Emmons High School step into her cafeteria, they are presented with an unattractive brown tile floor, exposed heating vents, battered tables, and a mishmash of serving equipment.

“Appearance plays a big part in how students perceive the quality of our menu,” says Minear, Glenville-Emmons’ food service manager. And the 50s era décor is hardly vintage-cool. “It does little to showcase our home made breads, hot dishes, and desserts.”

That will all change next fall. Minear and Superintendent Mark Roubinek applied for and won a cafeteria makeover worth up to \$40,000 in serving equipment, nutrition education products, staff uniforms, and expert consultation.

The Minnesota School Nutrition Association (MSNA) and Owatonna-based Learning ZoneXpress launched the Extreme Cafeteria Makeover last October to acknowledge the many challenges faced by school districts across the country and offer hope to one lucky school. Food and fuel costs have risen to record levels in 2008 as federal funding for the National School Lunch Program has stalled.

Jean Ronnei, MSNA President, noted “The school foods landscape has never been more challenging. We have seen double digit price increases for basic foods that are required to prepare and serve nutritious school meals at a time when parent requests for healthy options are at an all-time high.”

A survey of school nutrition professionals nationwide found that the average price of meat increased 11%, fruit and vegetable prices increased 13%, milk prices increased 14%, and bread prices increased 15% (Impact of Rising Food Prices on Nutrition, School Nutrition Association, September 2008, accessed at www.schoolnutrition.org). Schools are doing everything they can to offset price increases. For example, one school district may use diced chicken on salads instead of offering a more expensive chicken fillet.

The makeover benefits Glenville-Emmons greatly, but will also expand the collective knowledge about innovative foodservice solutions for tough economic times. MSNA and its partners hope to demonstrate what’s possible in merchandising, marketing, management, and fresh, cost-conscious menu ideas for any Minnesota school. The prize package features products and services from the following local and national companies:

- » Learning ZoneXpress – innovative nutrition education posters and other products
- » Duke Manufacturing - high-quality serving line equipment
- » inTEAM Associates - a two-day consultation on a critical function like food safety or staff training
- » Brandaids –staff uniforms embroidered with the school logo
- » Cambro – new lunch trays, tongs, and other serving products

Ronnei, who also leads the nationally-recognized child nutrition program at St. Paul Public Schools, described the potential impact for the school meals community. “A makeover like this, with new equipment, training, and fun educational products, has the potential to increase the number of students who eat school lunch

every day. An increase in revenue can certainly offset rising food prices and will also educate others about the value of operational investments.”

Makeover partners will help the winning district plan for and manage the installment during the summer of 2009. “These partners understand the daily challenges our schools face and have stepped up to give one lucky school a cafeteria facelift! MSNA is pleased to be a part of this first-of-its-kind cafeteria makeover contest designed as a private-public partnership between our association and industry partners.” Ronnei said.

Additional details about the contest are available at www.mnsna.org or www.learningzonexpress.com.