

# NATIONS'S Restaurant News®

**EDITOR'S LETTER**


## Fueling community

**N**o one can argue that healthful food isn't important. That the nutrients provided by vegetables, whole grains, fruits and greens provide proven health benefits that can lead to a fit lifestyle and prolonged life.

There are plenty of occasions for indulgence — and lucky for me perhaps just as much science behind the benefits of some chocolate and red wine.

But this country is suffering from poor health. The facts are readily available.

With half of a consumer's food dollar now going to restaurants, I believe the industry has a responsibility to provide healthful food. It can and should be addressed in ways that fit each restaurant brand's promise to its customers. It's about a holistic approach to food, and it's what more consumers are demanding each day. (See more on healthful foods in our report on page 14.)

After building menus that include healthful options, the next step is to get that food into the hands of those that perhaps need it most. Underserved communities and disadvantaged families need healthful food from restaurants. And they need opportunity from an industry that can provide so much.

This is where a certain group of restaurant operators have been looking to step in. I attended a conference in Los Angeles last week, Restaurant High — an event created by law firm Davis Wright Tremaine LLP to connect emerging restaurant brands, the money that can fund them and industry players looking to support a broader conversation around restaurants and the communities they serve. It is a gathering unlike any other.

This year the program included a job fair and educational program at Hollywood High School that introduced hundreds of students to careers in foodservice and other industries.

Young adults want the industry to offer them opportunities and healthful food. When students at Hollywood High were asked why they wanted to attend Restaurant High and the job and food fair A Taste of Tomorrow the students spoke:

"I discovered that I love hospitality and seeing people pleased with my service and am interested in furthering myself in this industry."

"Something at this event could spark a passion in me. I do not want to deprive myself of that."

"Only a few weeks ago I was saddened by how many of my peers were eating unhealthy snacks because it's the only option they have/what tastes good to them. I wanted to start taste testing for foods in a farmers market to find healthy/delicious items to pitch to the school to sell in the vending machines."

"I would like to attend to learn more about cooking, how a business works, and be a part of something."

Just to be certain these responses from 14 to 17 year olds weren't written by advisers or parents, one student said the reason for attendance is simply: "Fooodoooood."

Building community through food. It can be that simple.



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