



STATE OF IDAHO

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

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NEWS RELEASE

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LOCAL SCHOOLS WILL CELEBRATE **"A HEALTHY HARVEST"**

(BOISE) The Idaho State Department of Agriculture's Idaho Preferred™ program and the Child Nutrition Programs of the State Department of Education are teaming up this year to get more Idaho-grown fruits and vegetables in school lunchrooms. And, in anticipation of new child nutrition standards that will take effect in 2006, both state agencies are promoting fund-raising options that support Idaho products.

"This is an exciting opportunity to introduce school children to some of the delicious foods grown right here in this state – and at the same time increase fruit consumption and add something fresh and new to school lunch menus," said Idaho Preferred program manager Leah Clark.

"It is important that children learn healthy eating habits early in their lives," said Superintendent of Public Instruction Marilyn Howard. "This program provides a way for schools to reinforce this habit that also helps provide a lesson about Idaho's rich agriculture production."

"What a great way to remind our youngsters of the role Idaho farming continues to play in their lives," Idaho State Department of Agriculture Director Pat Takasugi said. "When you can provide students with a fresh peach or apple grown right from their communities, it helps them connect the dots between the farm and what's on the dinner table."

Meridian's 25 elementary schools are participating in the project called "Healthy Harvest." Year-round schools started serving fresh peaches, pears, watermelons and nectarines on August 19 and will continue until August 25.

Traditional calendar schools will serve the Idaho products September 12-16. At that time, locally-grown pluots (plum/apricot cross) and apples will be added to the menu.

The schools will also be provided with grade level-specific curriculum packets that teachers can use to incorporate the commodities into their classroom activities all year.

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Additionally, this fall, Idaho Preferred and the State Department of Education will pilot a new project in the Treasure Valley, offering schools Idaho-grown products for fund-raisers. The effort comes as new federal nutrition standards take effect, requiring more wholesome food in schools, including the items sold for fund-raisers. Community members who wish to support their local schools can buy Idaho apples, potatoes, onions, honey, herbs, water and specialty foods.

For more information about how to include Idaho Preferred products in your school's fund-raiser, call Leah Clark at 332-8684, or Heidi Martin, Child Nutrition Specialist, at 332-6827.

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