

P 94



East Village Community School, PS 315
Children's Workshop School, PS 361
P 94
610 East 12th Street, NYC



P R E S S R E L E A S E

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LOWER EAST SIDE SCHOOLS FIRST IN CITY TO SWITCH FROM STYROFOAM TO "GREEN" CAFETERIA TRAYS

Parents and kids raised money to make their building healthier

Lower East Side, NYC, April 2009

This month, three small schools that share the PS 61 building on East 12th Street became the city's first public schools to make the switch from Styrofoam cafeteria trays to biodegradable, compostable sugarcane pulp trays. Styrofoam has been associated with adverse health effects such as blood disease and cancer, and is known to clog landfills and pollute ground water. Styrofoam trays have been used in every one of the Department of Education's 1200 schools—until now. "We knew we could do better, as a school and as a community," said Helen Greenberg, an EVCS parent who spearheaded the switch. "Our kids can now see how everything they do makes a difference to our planet."

Kids' and parents' raised the money from Friday popcorn sales

East Village Community School (EVCS), Children's Workshop School (CWS) (both District 1 schools) and P94 (a District 75 school) are small elementary programs that share a building on East 12th Street between Avenues B and C. Some 500 children eat lunch and breakfast there daily. That meant well over 100,000 Styrofoam trays traveling to local landfills every school year from a single building. "Getting the Styrofoam out of our schools is a real contribution we can make toward a healthier world for our kids," said Claudine Anrather, PTA co-president at CWS.

EVCS and CWS parents and kids raised the money to purchase pulp trays through Popcorn Friday, a weekly sale of organic popcorn for \$1 a bag. The NYC Dept of Education's Manhattan Regional Director for SchoolFood, has been a cheerleader for the schools' efforts. EVCS and CWS will split the cost of the trays (they run 8 cents a piece, versus 4 cents for Styrofoam) and together the two schools will fund 500 trays daily for the entire school building.

Indeed, the catalyst for the change was students themselves, and they continue to do their part: "Two years ago, our fifth graders put on a play about the Styrofoam trays NYC schools throw out every day," said Joyce George, CWS PTA co-president. "It was a wake-up call." Kids at P94, a small, special education program, act as recycling monitors when their school is using the cafeteria and have posted signs to help others remember which bins are for garbage and which are for recycling.

Styrofoam takes up to 20,000 years to break down

Every day, the Department of Education sends 800,000 Styrofoam trays to landfills, and those trays are estimated to take 10,000 to 20,000 years to break down. The sugarcane pulp trays, on the other hand, can be composted in a matter of weeks, and contain no toxins that can leech into food, or pollute ground water or the air, as Styrofoam does.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE CALL THE NUMBERS ABOVE; PHOTOS AVAILABLE