



ABC CLARION

High school students are welcome to send articles or comics to clarionabc@gmail.com

School Lunch: Food for Thought

by Alena Zhang

Over 30 million students across the United States receive school lunches through the National School Lunch Program every day. For many children, this meal is the only reliable meal of the day, and some students consume more than half of their daily calories at school. If students are eating so much in their lunchrooms, we should expect the food to be healthy.

First Lady Michelle Obama has attempted to improve the school lunch system in recent years. The Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010 sets new nutrition standards for public schools by providing resources to establish farm-to-school networks for fresh produce, regulating vending machine sales, and setting limitations for sugar, salt, and fat content.

Researchers have found that more nutritious diets are associated with better performance on exams, increased focus, and higher attendance rates. Additionally, eliminating soft drinks in vending machines had a positive effect on behavioral outcomes such as tardiness and disciplinary referrals.

However, the bill provoked backlash: students complained that reduced portion sizes left them hungry, and some willingly opted for hunger over healthy lunches. Most students have very low expectations for school lunches. Most of the time, they don't know the ingredients going into our

food. Besides the immense appeal of the enigmatic "mystery meat," anyone will admit that it's unnerving to down a forkful of brown slop.

When I went to public school, teachers usually brought their own lunch or drove out to eat at a nearby food chain. As students, many of us would have left campus for lunch if we had the freedom to do so. Most of our parents didn't have time to make our food. So we were stuck with school lunches.

But the First Lady's efforts were less apparent in private schools, where laws are regulated on a state-by-state basis. They don't have much experience with government regulated meals — private schools simply have more funding, whether it be from tuition or donations. At my school, we pay \$1350 for our lunch — that's about \$8 per meal.

When you first step inside our dining hall, you see a salad bar stocked with fresh ingredients. Beside that bar, sandwich meats and cheeses neighbor cups of yogurt and slices of prepared fruit. To your left, a buffet-style line gravitates toward the main entrée. Or, you might see some students vying for the vegetarian option or that day's special soup. Deep fried foods are rarely found in our dining hall. At the drink dispenser, there's water, milk, and fruit juice, but no soda.

We can get as many servings as we want; no one goes hungry from a lack of food. On a normal day, the director of food services will roam the dining hall and travel from table to table. He'll ask us what we think about that day's meal: should they make it more often, or less? How is the taste? Is there anything they should change? The teachers' opinions are just as important — they eat the same food as us.

School lunch **can** be good. It **can** send students through classes with an appetite for learning, instead of an appetite for their next meal. It **can** have the balance of nutrients essential to a child's physical growth and development. It **can** be an enjoyable break from the staleness of the school day.

Although public school lunch programs are controlled by federal laws, students and parents alike can try to make a difference in their own communities. Every parent cares about his or her child's health. You could spend a few of minutes every day asking what your child ate at school. As a result, you would be more informed and your child would have higher self-awareness about their eating habits. If you can find the time, attend a Board of Education meeting. Voice your concerns. Find other parents who want to do the same.

If you're a student, tell your parents what you think about the school lunch. Is

there anything you want to change? Although it may seem like a daunting task, the only way to find out is to try. By sparking discussion in your friend groups and your health classes, you can join forces and inspire change in your school community. As more people understand the potential of a school lunch system, you can reach toward a common goal. Start small and build your cause from there: your ideas for an appetizer could lead to a revolutionary entrée like no one has ever seen before.

Buffalo dudio



Drawn by Angelina Li

There Is No Secret to a Happy Life

by Audrey Zhou

Dear Diary,

January 8, 2015

I'm beginning to regret so many of my past decisions. Or rather, I'm starting to regret a single decision that I stuck to throughout my life. When I was an adolescent, my father had revealed to me "the secret to a happy life". "Just look at the poor folk" He said, "Do you think they're happy when they're constantly worried about their finances? What about women? Do you think they'd be happy marrying a guy who can't even support them? Trust me, son. The only thing you need is money. Everything else can come after." I believed in what he said my entire life. When all of the other high schoolers were out goofing around, I was inside studying. When my wife Caroline was giving birth to our only daughter Maggie, I was on a business trip on the other side of the world, vying for a promotion.

At the back of my mind I had always felt guilty about not being there for my family. Maybe, just maybe, if I made

enough, I could provide a happy life for my family and they would forgive me for all the times I didn't come through. As I drifted apart from my wife and daughter, I began to spend more and more time at work. But the more I worked, the more they drifted away from me. It was a never ending cycle. One day, Caroline finally had enough. She didn't care about the money anymore. She just wanted someone who would be with her and little Maggie. She just wanted someone who she knew loved her. She didn't see that working so much was how I showed that I loved her.

Perhaps the reason I am suddenly reminiscing is that on this day, 30 years ago, Caroline asked for a divorce. I still remember the shock that I felt. I had realized that she was unhappy but I hadn't realized that she would go that far. I can recall the glistening tears that rolled down Caroline's cheeks as she quietly sobbed. I can remember looking down at the divorce papers in front of me, unable to comprehend what

was happening. My silence had only transformed Caroline's sadness into anger. I still remember the enraged look on her face as she screeched the question that she had been thinking for the entirety of our marriage. "Why did you marry me in the first place when all you love is money?"

That night she left me and Maggie forever. She wanted a new life and she didn't want either of us to get in the way of it. She never contacted us again after that. I didn't have the chance to salvage my relationship with Caroline but I still had the opportunity to be there for Maggie.

But I was incorrigible.

Every time I saw Maggie, all I saw was her accusatory gaze, blaming me for ruining our family. So I buried myself in work to avoid coming home and seeing that look. I made her as comfortable as I could and fulfilled her every material wish. I thought I could buy her forgiveness. But on the day Maggie left for college, she didn't thank me for supporting her. She

didn't say goodbye. All she said was "You really haven't learned anything after mom left, huh. Despite what you think, my love isn't something that you can buy. I won't miss you." After that, just like her mother, Maggie never came back home.

So that's how I got here. 72 years old. Divorced. In a nursing home. I haven't seen my daughter nor my ex-wife in years. I suppose that's why I'm writing in a diary. There's no one else for me to talk to. Perhaps it is because I had so long to think to myself that I finally can see everything clearly. My father had lied. Just having money doesn't guarantee happiness. After all, what use do I have with all this money if I have no one to enjoy it with?

If only I could start life over again. I wouldn't have made the same mistake.

Sincerely,
John Dorian

Managing Editor: Sydney Peng
Executive Editor: Oscar Chen

Members: Adam Deng, Adam Liu, Alena Zhang, Aileen Wu, Angelina Li, Audrey Zhou, Brandon Ho, Harvey Wang, Karen Li, Lawrence Huang, Marina Luo, Nicole Cheng, Olivia Nguyen, Oscar Chen, Paschal Park, Sanford Ren, Siyu Cao, Siyu Hou, Sophia Hu, Sydney Peng, Tanya Wang, Thomas Lynch, Victor Zhang, Victoria Tian, Winston Huang

• Website: www.GCTimes.net/abc.php