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‘Cooking with Sue’ a healthy hit at Livingston

With the proliferation of fast food and increasingly busy schedules for parents and families, cooking and baking is becoming a lost tradition.

Former City School District of Albany Board of Education member Sue Kushner helped keep that tradition alive over the last two school years for students at Philip Livingston Magnet Academy.



“Cooking with Sue” quickly became one of Livingston’s most popular after-school activities. Nearly 70 students in grades 6-8 participated in the program during the 2008-09 school year, learning to make a wide range of appetizers, meals and desserts from scratch.

“Food preparation is less likely to be a shared activity in households, having been replaced by the microwave,” Ms. Kushner said. “It’s just not done at home as much anymore. Food preparation is a great way to bring students together in a congenial, educational setting.”

“Cooking With Sue” was a fast paced, hands-on class designed to take the mystery out of cooking and baking. Supported in 2008-09 by the Police Athletic League, the program was held from 3 p.m. until about 4:15 p.m. every Tuesday and Thursday in Livingston’s family and consumer science classroom.

The program focused on the use of nutritious ingredients to make healthy foods. With rare exception, all food was prepared from scratch. Students were required to perform all aspects of food preparation – cooking, baking and clean up – and they also learned how to read, follow and adjust cookbook recipes.

Student creativity was encouraged with respect to healthy recipe variations.

Students cooked or baked in every class, and enjoyed eating what they prepared before going home. An extra quantity also was prepared so students were able to take large samples home to share and discuss with family and friends.



“The home-school connection was very important to me,” Ms. Kushner said. “Sharing homemade food prepared by a family member is just the thing that families need to feel connected.”

A cookbook of selected recipes prepared during class was compiled and given to students at the end of the semester so they could continue to cook at home.

Here is just a taste of the dishes students created in 2008-09:

- “Gorp” an easy-to-make healthy snack, consisting primarily of raisins, peanuts, almonds and M&M’s
- Chocolate dipped strawberries, bananas and cranberries
- Fresh fruit salad (honeydew, cantaloupe, strawberries, pineapple grapes, bananas) with homemade yogurt dip
- Chicken noodle soup
- Lasagna
- Kickin’ Buffalo chicken (grilled chicken breast with pasta, carrots & celery in hot Buffalo sauce)
- Grilled Reuben sandwiches
- Pancakes (strawberry, blueberry, apple and banana)
- Shrimp Alfredo
- Russian teacakes
- Pepperoni pizza
- Cinnamon French toast, bacon and cantaloupe
- Egg salad sandwiches
- Garden salad with homemade Italian dressing, cheese and croutons



Rachel Ray, eat your heart out!