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Toronto, May 10th, 2011

Media Release

PDSB students create local food menus for their cafeterias in “Cooking Up Action” challenge! *Gourmet Society 2 Team of Applewood Heights Secondary School wins the day!*

(Mississauga) The Peel School Food Action Coalition is pleased to announce that the winner of the “Cooking Up Action!” Menu Challenge is the Gourmet Society 2 of Applewood Heights Secondary School! Their winning menu included a delectable Ontario butternut squash soup and a delicious entree of local cauliflower mash and herbed Ontario chicken. Gourmet Society 2 has won \$1000 for their team plus a visit to a local farm for a true local food experience and their dish will be served in Peel District School Board cafeterias this fall! Runner up was Gourmet Society 1, who won \$500 and a farm visit. Third place went to the Fried Eggs team from John Fraser Secondary School, who will also receive a farm visit and gift certificates to a bookstore.

Food sold to students in Ontario schools will take a dramatic shift this September with the government’s new School Food and Beverage Policy (PPM 150), emphasizing healthy menu items. To respond to this upcoming change, secondary students in the Peel District School Board (PDSB) participated directly in creating their own meal option that features local healthy Ontario foods through the first “Cooking Up Action!” Menu Challenge.

On May 6th, three student teams from John Fraser and Applewood Heights Secondary Schools competed in Cooking Up Action’s cook-off finale. These 3 finalist teams were chosen from over 35 teams of PDSB students that registered to compete in the challenge. The finalists for the cook-off received high points for their use of local Ontario food in their menus and on their compliance with the new healthy eating policy. The cook-off judges included a student school board trustee, a local farmer from Matchbox Seed Company Farm, an EcoSource representative, a judge from Peel Public Health, Chartwells and West Credit Secondary School.

The winning student dish will be added to menus in PDSB cafeterias come September 2011, a first for a provincial school board. Chartwells (a division of Compass Group Canada), the primary foodservice provider for the majority of PDSB schools, in addition to almost 900 schools across Canada, is excited about adding a student designed dish to its menus. “Chartwells is committed to serving food and creating menus that help students make wise food choices that foster healthy development and eating patterns,” said Ross Munro, president of Chartwells. “We are committed to helping students and parents understand PPM150, assure them that healthy, tasty food is available in their cafeterias and what better way to do this than include dishes created by students.”

“Cooking Up Action!” is part of the School Food Action Coalition project. This innovative new project, facilitated by EcoSource, a local environmental organization, is the first of its kind in Ontario. EcoSource, the Peel District School Board, Chartwells and Peel Public Health formed this partnership to better understand and increase student awareness and engagement in local food choices in their cafeterias. This unique and comprehensive project includes food auditing, the introduction of new local food ingredients and menu options and campaigns for students to participate directly in the food changes coming to their cafeterias.

Lea Ann Mallett, Executive Director of EcoSource said, “EcoSource’s work with the PDSB over the last four years has shown us that students want to be directly involved in the food choices in their cafeterias. If we give students a chance to taste Ontario foods and create their own local food menu items, they will be more empowered to choose to eat them. “Cooking Up Action!” gives students the power to create their own local menu options and see them offered right in their cafeteria.”

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Background:

The Peel board defines local food as food produced in Ontario with primary ingredients raised and grown in Ontario. Choosing local food whenever possible is the first guiding principle of the Peel board's Environmental Policy.

EcoSource is the nonprofit environmental organization bringing the key food system stakeholders to the table to create the connections between local and healthy food. EcoSource provides innovative education programs in Peel and throughout the province to more than 25,000 youth and their families each year. For more information, visit www.ecosource.ca.

Compass Group Canada is the country's leading foodservice and support services company, with over \$1.4 billion in revenues in 2010 and over 23,000 associates across the country. Operating sectors include: Canteen Vending Services, Chartwells, Compass Group Leisure and Entertainment, Crothall, Eurest, Eurest Services, ESS, Gourmet Cuisine, Morrison, Levy Restaurants, Restaurant Associates, and The Hurley Group. With 428,000 associates worldwide, its parent company, UK-based Compass Group PLC had revenues of £14.5 billion in the year to September 30, 2010. For more information visit www.compass-canada.com.

The Peel District School Board serves more than 150,000 students in kindergarten to grade 12. Operating 233 schools in the municipalities of Brampton, Caledon and Mississauga, the Peel board is the largest employer in Peel. The board's annual budget is \$1.3 billion. For more information, visit the board's website at www.peelschools.org.

The School Food Action Coalition was made possible with funding from the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs through the Broader Public Sector Investment Fund of the Greenbelt Fund. Chartwells also received funding in order to conduct its product review. For more information visit www.ontariofresh.ca.

For more information about the School Food and Beverage Policy, visit www.ontario.ca/healthyschools.

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