



PRESS OPPORTUNITY / July 24, 2008

**In a City Famous for Food, Kids Say No Thanks To Cafeteria Fare
Youth Design 21st Century “Green” Cafeteria
Computer Game, “Ultimate Lunch Tray,” Unveiled**

NEW ORLEANS, LA - For the third year running, the Rethinkers, youth from the nationally noted organization Kids Rethink New Orleans Schools, will stand in front of the city and roll out a carefully developed slate of recommendations. The list addresses passionate concerns for students here and around the US as well: school food and school cafeterias.

Local media won't want to miss **the Rethinkers' news conference on Thursday, July 24 at 10 am. (Home Space Gallery, 1128 St. Roch Ave., one block off of St. Claude).** Some big-name local leaders will be in attendance, but kids will do most of the talking. And who better than students to have a voice in the city's effort to reinvent its troubled school system? The articulate voices of the Rethinkers can surprise even seasoned reporters. The youngest member is only eight-years-old, and most are middle schoolers.

Why is it that school cafeterias are serving unhealthy and unappetizing factory-produced fare in place of abundant local produce – wild-caught shrimp, for instance, or fruits and vegetables from area farms?

Join us on the 24th to hear answers from the real experts: the students who attend our schools.

Other news conference highlights:

- The unveiling of “Ultimate Lunch Tray.” With the help of New York City's World Wide Workshop, the Rethinkers have just finished an interactive prototype for a video game. Educators take note: “Ultimate Lunch Tray,” is a pioneering effort by children to teach other children the links between school food, good health, the local economy and environmental protection.

- A second unveiling: the Rethinkers 21st Century Public School Cafeteria. Our youth worked with a chef, architect, and landscape expert to design a “green” cafeteria that is pleasant to eat in, efficiently serves a horde of hungry students, and gives back to the environment. It is surrounded by vegetable gardens.
- Hard-hitting, larger-than-life visuals designed by the Rethinkers with expert assistance from YA/YA, the city’s esteemed youth arts group. (Ever seen a giant spork?)
- Rethink announcement: In September, we launch a new initiative, “the Rethink Club,” a first step toward building a nationwide Rethink movement in the US. Four New Orleans public schools, two operated by the Recovery School District and two by charters, will host Rethink Clubs as after-school programs.

Back to food: With attention disorders, youth obesity and diabetes reaching epidemic proportions, schools desperately need to “rethink” the cafeteria diet – especially given how important free lunch is in the lives of low-income students. This health crisis comes at a time when local food producers and harvesters are suffering a crisis of their own. They are in urgent need of local market support if they are to survive crippling fuel prices and competition from foreign imports with high chemical content and disastrous environmental impacts.

About us: Kids Rethink New Orleans Schools sprang up in the aftermath of Katrina as a way to get input from folks too often ignored by politicians and school bureaucrats: the kids who actually are on the receiving end of school policy.

Last year, as New Orleans rolled up its sleeves to begin rebuilding shattered school houses, the Rethinkers worked with local architects to design an environmentally “green” bathroom that would also mitigate problems that have made too many school restrooms breeding grounds for drugs and bullying as well as unsanitary conditions. The Rethinkers 21st Century Green Bathroom is an official part of the Public School Facilities Master Plan for the City of New Orleans, which will be released later this summer. A “fly-over” electronic tour of the bathroom is available from Rethink.

Rethink works collaboratively with three other youth organizing groups in the city: the Fyre Youth Squad, VAYLA-NO (Vietnamese American Youth Leaders Association of New Orleans) and JJPL (Juvenile Justice Project of Louisiana).

See attached background sheet for more info, and visit our website: www.TheRethinkers.org.

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