

Media Release

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For Immediate Release

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Restaurant Run by Fourth Graders Entices Celebrity Chefs, VIP Guests

Chefs Patrick Mulvaney and Jeff Clark worked with Oak Park elementary school students on elegant dining experience

April 4, 2011 (Sacramento) – It has all the trappings of a great dining experience – a celebrity chef, a VIP guest list, fine linen, fancy china and a haute cuisine made from fresh local products.

The twist on this “Five Star Restaurant” is that it’s run entirely by fourth graders.

At 5:30 p.m. on Tuesday, a group of dedicated elementary school students will transform the cafeteria of Oak Ridge Elementary School in Oak Park into a “Five Star Restaurant,” an elegant evening conceived, designed and executed by the students themselves – with the help of Patrick Mulvaney of Mulvaney’s Building and Loan Restaurant and Jeff Clark of Nugget Markets.

“The idea is to help kids experience the learning skills of entrepreneurship,” says Stella Ruiz, of Miracles and Milestones, the group that organized the 10-week restaurant program for 48 students.

From the first day of the program to Tuesday’s culmination, the kids were treated like partners in a real business, says Ruiz. Students had to interview for their jobs on the sales, public relations, interior design and finance teams. They held business meetings after school and on Saturdays. They made sales calls to sell tickets at the Capitol, City Hall and other locations around Sacramento.

City Councilman Jay Schenirer, Senate Pro Tem Darrell Steinberg, SCUSD Superintendent Jonathan Raymond and Vance Raye, presiding justice of the Third District Court of Appeal, are among the local VIPs who purchased \$60 tickets to the dinner.

The kids also learned the ins and outs of the restaurant business from Mulvaney and Clark, including how to plan, cook and serve gourmet meals.

“The kids were so excited to be involved that some would show up at 7:30 a.m. for the 9 a.m. program on Saturdays,” Ruiz said.

Last Sunday, students in the program accompanied four of Mulvaney’s chefs on a shopping trip to a local farmer’s market, where they purchased ingredients for Tuesday’s dinner.

So what’s on the menu?

Oak Ridge Principal Doug Huscher says that’s a closely guarded secret. “We’ll find out that night when the students announce the menu,” he said.

The best part of the experience is that the students themselves get to decide which field trips to take with the estimated \$3,000 to \$4,000 profit the restaurant will reap.

“I’m extremely proud of the kids and extremely grateful to all of the people who participated,” says Huscher. “This has been an invaluable real-world experience for students.”

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