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HOUSTON, WE HAVE A SOLUTION: THE CHEFS HAVE LANDED!

Dateline January 1, 2010. Remember Houston's recognition as America's fattest city? File that factoid away as very old news. The city's culinary community has mobilized to combat the childhood obesity epidemic at the grassroots level by teaching children about their food from seed to plate. The only initiative in the country of its scope, the *Chefs in Schools*™ program, operated by Recipe for Success Foundation (RFS), benefits from an advisory board of 58 professional chefs who give their time, month after month, to teach children to cook. Recipe for Success Foundation's entire focus is on combating childhood obesity and has attracted Houston's finest chefs to help, including several with national reputations like Robert DelGrande, Monica Pope, Bryan Caswell and Randy Evans. Volunteer chefs teach cooking to 550 eager fourth graders each month, using fully outfitted portable cooking carts designed and supplied by the Foundation. The *celebrity* chefs introduce their adoring students to taste and flavor combinations as well as techniques and skills that will serve them for a lifetime, while they prepare healthy meals and snacks that can be duplicated at home.

Recipe for Success Foundation, the brainchild of Houston philanthropists, Gracie and Bob Cavnar, is dedicated to combating childhood obesity by introducing children to their food from seed to plate. Following Gracie Cavnar's mantra that "good food is fun," RFS provides nutrition and gardening staff to support the volunteer chefs, and to deliver schools days filled with experiential learning opportunities in the kitchen and gardens.

RFS operates showcase Seed-to-Plate Education™ programs in five Houston ISD elementary schools serving at-risk populations. RFS builds *Recipe Gardens*™ on the school grounds—the largest a half-acre, where children grow and harvest the food they will learn to cook seasonally. In some schools, the Seed-to-Plate Nutrition Education™ program is treated as an official ancillary class, and every grade level student from Pre-K through Fifth gets 20 hours of integrated nutrition, cooking and gardening instruction annually. In-class programs are complemented by grade-specific after school programs, *Eat This!*™ and *Kid's Dig it!*™. In total, RFS works with 3050 elementary students every month during the school year. The *Eat This! Summer Camps*™ held in June and July are designed especially for graduating fifth graders who learn how food is marketed to them and are then tasked with developing and selling their own healthy food product. In 2010 the City of Houston will launch RFS *Eat This!*™ & *Kids Dig It!*™ after school and summer camps in six community centers and new school locations are being added across the city.

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After just four years, the Foundation's efforts are already reaping rewards. Parents report their children's changed eating behaviors and the kids themselves respond more enthusiastically to new foods, including a broader variety of fruits and vegetables, while they display a solid awareness of what healthy eating is all about. The final field edit is being conducted of the RFS Seed-to-Plate Nutrition Education™ program guide and it will be published by July 2010 when the plan for national expansion will be launched.

Eat It! Food Adventures™, a kids cookbook authored by Gracie Cavnar in collaboration with staff and volunteer chefs that features an adventure story woven through it, is scheduled for release in 2010. A television show of the same name is in pre-production with Houston PBS for national syndication.

Now Cavnar and her team are putting the finishing touches on Hope Farms™, an organic urban farm and agricultural education site built in collaboration with the Houston Livestock Show & Rodeo. Hope Farms™ if finalized as envisioned will be 100 acres in the center of the city--the largest urban farm in the world and provide on-site RFS Seed-to-Plate Nutrition Education™ for all ages, on-site market and a rolling green market to deliver affordable produce for neighborhoods marooned in "food deserts," job opportunities for urban youth, community gardens and market growing business incubation opportunities .

In 2008, a year filled with national recognition, Ms. Cavnar was honored in New York by Dr. Mehmet Oz and his HealthCorps™ foundation for her "Significant Contribution to the Health and Wellbeing of American Youth;" by The Houston Junior Forum with their *Shining Star Award* for her service as the volunteer CEO and Founder of Recipe for Success Foundation; with the 36th annual *SAVVY Award* from Macy's and the Houston Chronicle, which recognizes individuals who have made Houston a better place through their selfless volunteerism and public service; with the 2008 *Mayor's Volunteer Houston Award* from Mayor Bill White; and with the President's *Volunteer Service Gold Award* from President George W. Bush. She was selected a 2008 *L'Oreal Paris Woman of Worth* Honoree from a national field of 3,000 nominees who volunteer to make the world a better place, was a 2009ABC/Channel 13 Houston *Women of Distinction*, and is one of five American women to receive the *Harlequin 2010 More than Words* award. ##END##

Recipe for Success Foundation is a 501(c)3 charity dedicated to combating childhood obesity by changing the way children understand appreciate and eat their food. More information can be found at www.recipe4success.org

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