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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## **Schools Find Pre-Packaged Meals Add to School Breakfast Success**

**Woodbury, NY, February 15, 2012** – The *got breakfast?*® Foundation this week announced the results of a 2012 Survey of School Breakfast Programs. Among the findings – variety, including pre-packaged meals – is a key to school breakfast success.

The online survey, conducted for the non-profit *got breakfast?* Foundation by Cline Consulting, asked food service directors representing 1,500 schools with an estimated enrollment of 2.2 million students, questions to assess current trends in school breakfast programs. Results showed that most continue to mix it up by offering cold, hot, grab and go, and pre-packaged breakfasts to keep the kids coming to breakfast.

Approximately 50% of the food service directors are “most likely” or “likely” to offer or expand breakfast in alternate sites with pre-packaged meals offered at least two times per week. Offering of pre-packaged breakfasts increased from “some” to “most” in 2012 with 79% reporting one of these responses; as compared to 72% in a similar survey conducted two years ago.

“Based on the survey results it appears that pre-packaged breakfasts are considered a means to increase participation or expand the breakfast program to alternate sites,” says *got breakfast?* Founder Gary Davis. “We have found that it takes four labor hours for every 600 breakfasts of

individual components to be assembled and distributed, but it only takes one labor hour to distribute 600 pre-packaged breakfasts – and labor savings go to the bottom line!”

For example, Buffalo Public Schools which serve 20,500 breakfasts daily in 70 schools have seen an increase of 3,000 breakfasts per day last year and 1,700 per day this year since implementing the Breakfast in the Classroom program and relying on a mix of hot, cold, and pre-packaged meals.

“I loved using pre-packaged breakfasts especially at start-up, because it was easy for food service staff in September to pack a whole unit with 25 breakfasts – easier for kids to take one package and one milk,” explained Bridget Wood, food service director for Buffalo Public Schools.

What’s in pre-packaged meals? The 2012 Survey reported the following top components to purchase in pre-packaged breakfasts: juice (97%); fruit cups (91%); cereal in a bowl (89%); and, muffins (83%).

“The key is not to get stuck in a rut – we are always revamping and upgrading and testing with students,” says James Hemmen, child nutrition services supervisor and executive chef for Roosevelt School District #66 in Phoenix, Arizona. Here, school breakfast is at 100% participation since adopting Universal School Breakfast in the Classroom six years ago to serve its nearly 11,000 students in 19 schools.

“Vendors have really stepped up to meet the changing regulations by offering tasty food that includes whole grains and more protein, for example,” says Hemmen. “Pre-packaged is great because the staff doesn’t have to gather four separate items to put together a meal. There are so many labor-saving options becoming available.”

This sentiment is echoed by Steve Gallagher, director of child nutrition services for Oklahoma City Public Schools. His tips for foodservice directors are, “Always keep your mind open to new and better products, know what is trending, do student surveys and taste tests with a crosscut of students before an item is placed on the menu.” Since implementing Universal Free Breakfast two years ago, participation has increased 20%, now serving 17,000 students daily.

“Breakfast in the Classroom would be very difficult to run well without the use of pre-packaged items,” says Gallagher. “They have improved significantly nutritionally and in flavor since I first started in this industry.”

In Pennsylvania, Pittsburgh Public Schools (PPS) serve a variety of pre-packaged breakfasts as part of its Universal Free Breakfast for 12,000 students daily at all of its 80 sites, which include elementary, middle, secondary, and early childhood centers. PPS has increased its breakfast participation by nearly 33%, notes Cathy Willett, food service purchasing supervisor.

Willett describes a typical weekly offering at their elementary schools includes, in addition to milk: pre-packaged meals two days a week that contain a whole grain, lower sugar bowl-pack cereal, a wholesome snack, and a 100% fruit juice pouch; hot breakfast two days per week is a choice of pre-packaged heat-and-serve mini pancakes, mini waffles, French toast sticks, egg muffin sandwiches, etc.; and a yogurt meal kit one day per week that contains 4 oz. lower-sugar yogurt, wholesome snack and 100% fruit juice.

According to the *got breakfast?* survey, of those offering pre-packaged breakfasts, “convenience” tops the list as to the reason why (37%); followed by “variety” (17%) and “kid appeal” (13%).

The mission of the *got breakfast?* Foundation is to ensure that every child starts the school day with a nutritious breakfast in order to learn, grow and develop to his or her fullest potential. Visit [www.gotbreakfast.org](http://www.gotbreakfast.org) for information.

Source: *got breakfast?*@Foundation