

## FOOD

# Healthier Meals on the Way to Schools

NewsUSA

(NU) - For the first time in U.S. history, kids may face a shorter lifespan than their parents. The cause? Obesity.

American children are suffering from the obesity epidemic that has plagued the nation for the past decade. Today, nearly 20 percent of 6-11 year-olds and over 18 percent of 12-17 year-olds are obese, and over 1/3 of both age groups are overweight. Childhood obesity has tripled in the last 30 years, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. A reliance on fast food, poor nutrition education, excessive caloric intake and lack of physical activity have been blamed for the ill health of the nation's youth.

First Lady Michelle Obama has made childhood obesity a central cause in her husband's administration. She has initiated the "Let's Move" campaign to solve the epidemic of dangerously heavy children within a generation. The goal is to give parents support, provide healthier meals in schools, encourage and enable kids to become physically active and to provide healthy, affordable food to all parts of the country. "We want our kids to face a different and more optimistic future in terms of their lifespan," says the First Lady.

A cornerstone of the Let's Move campaign is the Healthier U.S. Schools Challenge Program, designed to create healthy and active kids. The program calls for higher school food quality, participation in meal programs, physical activity and nutrition education. Food service workers in more than 75 percent of schools have pledged to work with school authorities to improve the nutrition in meals. Teachers, principals and school administrators have



**Unhealthy school lunches contribute to childhood obesity.**

sworn support for the new measures. Major school food suppliers have agreed to decrease the sugar, fat and salt in school meals, and increase the use of whole grains and produce.

School suppliers of higher-quality food at an affordable price are welcoming the trend toward feeding nutritious wholesome meals to the nation's youth. Food safety leader iPura, producer of organically cleaned seafood, provides schools with a safe, clean source that includes guarantees of good farming and manufacturing practices from Source-to-Kitchen. iPura offers schools the benefits of food safety, sustainability and the health attributes of seafood backed by a strong guarantee of quality, contributing to the efforts of school meal authorities to improve the health of students nationwide.

Ending childhood obesity will require that parents, schools and food companies join forces and maintain focus for years to come. The lifespan of our children depends on it.