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## Kevin Riordan: Campbell CEO serves lunch at Holy Name School in Camden



By Kevin Riordan  
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Big bosses like to talk about rolling up their sleeves and getting down to work.

But the biggest boss at the Campbell Soup Co. actually did so the other day, albeit in a bright-red T-shirt, at Holy Name School in North Camden.

"It was a lot of fun," said company president and chief executive officer Denise Morrison, who donned latex gloves and helped prepare and serve a healthful, low-cost lunch to 170 students.

The event during Campbell's weeklong Make a Difference campaign also highlighted the Camden company's commitment to reducing juvenile obesity in the city. More than 1,200 company volunteers have been deployed in that effort.

"One of the things I feel really strongly about as a new CEO is getting into the community," said Morrison, 57, who took over the post Aug. 1.

She's the first woman among the 12 people who have headed the company in its 142-year history.

History also was made at Holy Name on Monday. White-toqued chefs don't usually prepare lunch, much less circulate among the tables of diners there.

"Never before," said Pat Quinter, principal of the school at North Fifth and Vine, an anchor in one of the poorest neighborhoods in one of the poorest cities in America.

I was there for the first hour, which was much more like a party than a nutrition education session.

"One of the children said, 'This is so fancy,' and another called it a 'five-star lunch,'" said Kim Fortunato, director of the antiobesity program.

Amid the happy pandemonium in the school basement, the Campbell CEO - a low-key but powerful presence - seemed perfectly pleased to be ladling out soup.

Morrison has a long career as an executive in the food industry and came to Campbell in 2003.

"I think what the event was for me was a live demonstration . . . of teaching children how to make smarter choices," said the Princeton Township resident, mother of two grown daughters. "If you teach the children, they'll go home and influence their parents."

Earlier this year, Campbell launched a \$10 million, 10-year program to reduce by half the current 40 percent obesity rate among the city's children.

Focusing initially on Holy Name and two public schools, in North Camden and Parkside, the company seeks to improve physical education and nutrition programs.

Campbell also is working with the Food Trust and other organizations to, among other goals, improve the produce selections at corner stores. Despite a population of nearly 80,000, Camden has only one major, brand-name supermarket, a Pathmark.

The nutrition initiative is a natural fit for a company that has persuaded generations of people, including children, to consume its foods.

Campbell products were featured prominently at Monday's lunch, which was designed to meet federal cost and nutrition guidelines. The menu featured turkey sandwiches on whole-wheat bread, tomato soup, and gelatin desserts infused with fruit juice and topped with raisins.

"One of my favorite moments from the lunch was when I was speaking with a third-grade student," said Pamela Rainey Lawler, development director of the Catholic Schools Partnership, which raises money to sustain parochial education in the city.

"I told the little girl that the woman over there is the president of Campbell Soup, that she runs the whole company, and [she couldn't] believe it," Lawler said.

But after Morrison introduced herself, all doubt was dispelled.

"It certainly gave one third grader a new perspective on what girls can do," Lawler said.

Said Quinter, "It was really a wonderful experience for the kids. . . . Besides the food, it was the fact that people care about them, that they came to the school to do something special.

"The children want to know when they [Campbell's] are coming back."

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