



The Top Your Own Salad bar is a feature at Glenham Elementary School in Beacon.

KAREN PAGANO/COURTESY PHOTO

Food service changes keep up with appetites

SEMBER WEINMAN
FOR THE POUGHKEEPSIE JOURNAL

Karen Pagano has been the Food Services director at the Beacon City School District for less than three years, and despite significant challenges, she has made it her mission to make the food served in Beacon tastier, healthier and more accessible. She has already had several successes and is ready for a new year full of improvements for the kids.

Beacon is a diverse community, where almost 50 percent of students qualify for free or reduced-price lunches. Pagano has the complicated challenge of providing access to healthy foods for the children who rely on school meals for their primary source of nutrition during the school week — at the same time she is charged with making meals desirable for those who can afford to buy lunch, but often bring their own.

Elementary school breakfast is \$1.25 and lunch is \$2.50 for paying students. For that small amount, the schools are required to provide a four-component breakfast and a five-component lunch that includes protein, milk, vegetables, fruit and grains. Pagano's budget consists of funding from the free and reduced lunches, and from individuals who opt-in to the lunch program. The school district does



Karen Pagano

COURTESY PHOTO

not provide funding for the lunch program. It is really difficult to balance these numbers. For Pagano, it is crucial to gain buy-in from the students who pay for their lunches in order to increase her buying power and her ability to provide healthy food for the children.

Upon taking her position, Pagano said she noticed that very few middle and high school students participated in the breakfast program. She found that it was logistically difficult for students to access breakfast in the cafeteria, especially for the high school students because the cafeteria is not located near the school entrance or near most of the classrooms. Encouraging children to eat breakfast is very important. A study released by non-profit Share Our Strength's No Kid Hungry campaign found that students who eat breakfast attend school an average of 1.5 more

days, their math scores average 17.5 percent higher and they are 20 percent more likely to finish high school.

Pagano started the Grab and Go breakfast program at Rombout Middle School during the 2014-2015 school year. Before the program, she saw a 1 percent participation rate among students. Her program has increased participation up to 12 percent on average — higher when the weather is cold. For a school population of almost 700, that means 84 kids are eating breakfast who weren't before. Karen said she has plans to roll out a similar program for the high school. Because the cafeteria is not easily accessible to the students before class, she was able to get a cart donated that will be positioned at the entrance of the school. She also worked with the high school administration to change homeroom to the first few minutes of school — and to allow students to eat in the classroom. She is optimistic that these changes, along with a dynamic in-school promotional campaign featuring student athletes, will greatly increase her breakfast numbers.

The Beacon Food Services program delivers a lot of milk to students — roughly 5,000 8-ounce cartons weekly. In fact milk is a component for both breakfast and lunch that Food

Services is required to offer to every child who receives these meals. Pagano said the milk being supplied to the district needed to be improved. Last spring she made two new requirements for her milk supply. She did not want to see high fructose corn syrup in the chocolate milk, and she did not want bovine growth hormones in any of the milks. These differences are more expensive, but the milk vendor who won her milk bid, Marcus Dairy, met the challenge for Beacon schools, and procured the milk from a farm collaborative that could meet these demands with fair competitive pricing.

Pagano is working on improving the quality of the chicken provided to students. Kids love tenders and patties, but these processed types of foods often have additives that include soy, milk, and eggs — all common allergens. Pagano wanted to avoid triggering allergic reactions among students who may not guess that these additives are lurking in their food. This year she found Pilgrim's Pride — Goldkist products had a line of minimally processed chicken that has no additives and uses only whole grains.

After studying child tastes and preferences, Pagano has found that children will eat raw veggies if presented as

See VEGGIES, Page 5G

RIVER LIFE

October 11

Town of Poughkeepsie: We spent an hour in quiet observation, arguably the best kind. We counted three monarchs and seven bluebirds - the former moving through, the latter settling in for the coming winter. Off to the north we heard "k-i-r-r-r-r-r." With a brisk southwest breeze, the call sounded far off, but we soon saw the red-tailed hawk circling in the sky, tacking in the wind like a sailboat. Then we heard the "chortle" of a bald eagle and within a minute the red-tail began to joust with the immature eagle, using its smaller size and greater maneuverability to fly circles around the larger raptor. No harm done - they seemed to be going through the motions as though it was expected of them. Both were probably in migration and soon disappeared over the forest to the east.

- Tom Lake, B.J. Jackson

October 12

Town of Poughkeepsie: There is a small, spring-fed brook that runs down the fall line at the south end of Dutchess County's Bowdoin Park. In prehistoric times it likely had a small run of white suckers, white perch, yellow perch, even river herring. Today it meets the river in a tidal backwater, a sediment trap formed inside the railroad tracks. At low tide today, we noticed a fish - a gorgeous smallmouth bass - caught upstream in the receding water, looking like it might get stranded in a shrinking pool. We climbed down to the water's edge, scooped up the fish, and released it into deeper water. [

- Kathleen Courtney, Mark Courtney, Bob Rightmyer

Beacon: We had to hustle! The new moon tide was rushing up on the sand, inches at a time, as we watched. Our seining team hauled the high tide beach with few expectations but managed to capture some gorgeous young-of-the-year [YOY] banded killifish (54-57 mm). My assistants, aged two to five years old, were impressed as the sunshine caught the killies' iridescent purple and lavender bands. The river was a refreshing 66 degrees Fahrenheit - still swim-suit weather - and salinity measured about 1.0 parts per thousand [ppt].

- Vanora Ryle, Siobhan Ryle, Angus Ryle, Matt Ryle, Tom Lake

October 14

Milan: A small flock of wild turkeys, one tom and four hens, just strolled past. Two of the hens were almost entirely white, leucistic, with only spots of normal color.

- Marty Otter

October 15

Northern Dutchess County: I had been looking for bobcats for years and years. My first one was in 1990, seen walking down the road like the Lord of the Manor. He turned and gave me a baleful look as if it questioning why I was on his road. Today I saw what I initially thought were fox crossing in front of my car. It was a mama bobcat and her two kits.

- Deborah Tracy-Kral



DEBORAH TRACY-KRAL/COURTESY PHOTO
Mother bobcat and kitten.

October 16

Northern Dutchess County: After waiting fifteen years for a bobcat sighting, I had my second one in two days. I saw what I thought was a coyote crossing the road and traveling up a residential driveway. I quickly pulled over and was thrilled to see it was another bobcat. After looking and hoping for years, I now had two separate sightings in two days.

- Deborah Tracy-Kral

Species Spotlight

PILEATED WOODPECKER

Cathy Shiga-Gattullo
For the Poughkeepsie Journal

Looks like: The nonmigratory pileated woodpecker is our largest woodpecker (about the size of a crow), with a long, strong bill, dramatic black-and-white markings, and a distinctive red crest.

Lives in: The pileated woodpecker lives in mature forests of nearly every type, ranging from New England to the southeastern United States. You can hear their loud, distinctive, almost monkey-like call in forests year-round.

Niche: These woodpeckers make uniquely elongated, almost rectangular holes to excavate wood borer beetles and carpenter ants, as well as cavities for nests. They will eat other insects such as flies, caterpillars, cockroaches and grasshoppers. They also eat wild fruits and nuts.

Threats: Pileated woodpeckers rely on standing dead trees and fallen logs for food, which are often undesirable for property owners. The pileated woodpecker populations declined prior to the mid-20th century as the eastern forests were cleared. Now, the population is healthy and stable. They need uninterrupted, large-range habitats that places like Mohonk Preserve provide.

Frequency: Pileated woodpeckers are common and numerous.

Reproduction: The woodpecker will form monogamous pairs for nesting and will take three to six weeks to construct their nest out of a dead tree. The female will lay a clutch of three to five eggs that will incubate for 15 to 18 days.



DAVID JOHNSON/COURTESY PHOTO

Pileated woodpeckers rely on standing dead trees and fallen logs for food.

Fun fact: The oldest known pileated woodpecker was 12 years, 11 months old. They will sometimes visit backyard bird feeders, especially for suet.

Cathy Shiga-Gattullo is the Education Coordinator for Interpretation, Mohonk Preserve. Contact her at myvalley@poughkeepsiejournal.com