

NESHAMINY

## Going green at lunchtime

*Officials hope bringing a salad bar to their middle school will inspire other district schools.*

By RACHEL CANELLI COURIER TIMES

Given the choice between an oil-oozing cheeseburger and a crisp salad, most days a group of five boys at Maple Point Middle School will go green.

While their friends are hankering for french fries, these seventh-graders are craving something crisper. And they're hoping that soon their classmates will be salivating for salads, too.

Alvaro Hurtado, Ryan Jacobs, Zack Miller, Ryan Wilhere and Jacob Roberts recently petitioned Neshaminy School District's food services department for a salad bar in their Middletown school's cafeteria.

Like most districts in the Lower Bucks area, Neshaminy provides nutritional options like fruit, milk, low-fat meat and cheese, wheat-based breads and pre-packaged salads.

But Alvaro and his buddies had an idea of something fresher.

So, food services director Marie Wallace suggested a setting similar to the restaurant chain Saladworks: fresh lettuce and a few toppings, including low-fat dressing of the students' choice for the same \$2.10 lunch price.

When the pupils met with administrators this week to figure out the details, Wallace said the new salad bar-like venue will be open for business Jan. 15.

"We're seeing all around the world that a majority of kids are overweight," said 13-year-old Ryan Jacobs. "They keep getting bigger and they don't care. Sooner or later, it's going to catch up with them and they're not going to be happy with themselves. We hope to set people's minds straight."

The concept came up during lunch one day while the boys noticed the greasy pizza and chatted about how tasty they thought salads were.

The kids approached teacher Kelly Macauley, who encouraged the boys to see if their schoolmates were interested. They got more than 400 out of 929 students in sixth through ninth grades to sign a petition.

As chairwoman of the district's family and consumer science department, Macauley has been educating her school on good nutrition and fitness with grant-funded programs like free fruit and vegetable samplings for pupils.

"We don't want the same stuff every day," said Zack, 12. "I never knew I liked salad until my parents encouraged me to try it. I'm hoping other kids will try it and like it, too."

For Macauley, the guys' attitude is refreshing.

"I'm very proud of them," Macauley said. "They would like to eat better, there just aren't many healthy choices."

That's why a few schools, like in Morrisville, have a similar salad bar set-up, officials said. While other districts, like Pennsbury, offer a salad bar at the high school, its middle schools' choices are mostly pre-made, according to district spokeswoman Ann Langtry.

To compare, there are roughly 359 calories in a single patty cheeseburger with condiments and vegetables, according to [www.caloriecount.com](http://www.caloriecount.com). A salad with vegetables, but no dressing, is about 106 calories. The dressing could add another 50 points, the same site said.

That's something that Superintendent Paul Kadri told the students to be cautious about. He also asked the students to track sales and meet with him again in case they need to revamp the marketing plan to interest more students.

The kids agreed to be spokesmen for the project by making announcements, creating posters, shooting commercials and surveying students for their favorite toppings and dressings to ensure the salads will sell.

"We're looking forward to you boys getting the word out. You'll be the voice of the seventh grade," Wallace told the young men.

She added that she's hoping this plan will act as a pilot program to inspire other schools. The Middletown high school recently added a comparable cart.

"We need feedback from the kids. We want people to be healthier, too," Wallace said. "We don't expect everybody to eat salad. But this is a step in the right direction."