



Health Department News Release

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SAFE FOOD CREW PROGRAM: MODEL FOR THE NATION **Press Conference planned December 2nd**

The Madison Department of Public Health, with funding provided from the Food and Drug Association, has developed a new and innovative program that will increase safe food training for food employees in Madison and nationwide. The program, called Safe Food Crew, is designed for food establishment managers to train their own staff without leaving their establishments. It rewards them with public recognition so the community will know they're taking efforts to keep food safe. **It will serve as a model nationwide.**

"We know from past attempts at providing safe food training to food employees that it's very difficult for them to leave their establishments and attend trainings," says Tommye Schneider, Director of Environmental Health and Laboratories with the Madison Department of Public Health. "This program has been developed with this reality in mind. Also, employee turnover rates are high in food establishments and training needs are continuous."

The Safe Food Crew program uses 15 short teaching units to educate food staff on the most critical food safety areas including: hand-washing, employee illness, bare hand contact with food, utensil washing, personal hygiene, thermometers, safe cooking, reheating, hot and cold holding, safe cooling, date marking, safe handling of raw animal foods, safe storage of raw animal foods, food surface sanitizing, food-borne illness. "In the future, if a diner sees the Safe Food Crew decal at their favorite restaurant, they can feel confident that food handlers are being instructed in the most current food safety principles," says Dr. Kathryn Vedder, Director of the Madison Department of Public Health.

"The Safe Food Crew program is easy to follow and helps me educate my restaurant staff on the importance of food safety," says Wally Borowski, one of the owners of Paisan's and Porta Bella Restaurants. "I believe my diners will appreciate the effort we've taken to make sure that our kitchen and food handling is safe." Paisan's Restaurant is one of 15 Madison area restaurants that's participated in the Safe Food Crew pilot program.

A Safe Food Crew press conference will be held on December 2, 2004 at 10am at Paisan's Restaurant located at 80 University Square, Madison.

Madison Department of Public Health officials and restaurant owners will be on hand to discuss the benefits of the Safe Food Crew program. Following the press conference, media will be allowed to tour the kitchen area to photograph or videotape the food safety tips the restaurant learned from the Safe Food Crew program.

Safe Food Crew website: <http://www.safefoodcrew.org> in English and soon Spanish.