**HISD student chefs compete to cook up change**

*April 21, 2016*– The temperature and emotions were high as seven culinary teams chopped, sliced, sautéed and baked for top culinary honors at this year’s Houston Cooking Up Change competition. Students from four HISD high schools participated in the contest for a chance to represent the district at the national finals in Washington, D.C. Barbara Jordan High School juniors Lilian Morua and Rocio Morin won the competition that was held April 16 at the Art Institute of Houston.

               Student chefs from Barbara Jordan High School, Davis High School, Harper Alternative School and last year’s champions, Westside High School, demonstrated expert-level culinary skills and excellent teamwork as they prepared their dishes for presentation to the judges.

                 Barbara Jordan High School culinary coach Michael Schuster trained with his student teams for nearly two and half months, creating all the dishes their school presented using HISD Nutrition Services guidelines for recipes. “We had to pay attention to the right amount of calories and we couldn’t use salt or sugar,” said Schuster.

               Morua’s and Morin’s winning recipe was Chicken Philly Sandwich, with sautéed onions, peppers and cheese. “This was very hard to judge,” said Chef Judge Gary Ly. “I was literally pulling my hair because they were all that good, but it was the straightforwardness of Lilian’s and Rocio’s dish that sold me in the end.” Ly also complimented the student chefs for their ingenuity using ingredients that HISD Nutrition Services uses for its recipes. Ly said Nutrition Services is on the right path by offering healthier, more multicultural dishes, and fresh and flavorful recipes. “I wish I had school meals like this when I was in school,” said Ly.

HISD Board of Education Trustee Anna Eastman, who sampled all dishes and complimented all student chefs for their amazing creations, presented the trophy to Morua and Morin. “It was really heartwarming to see the pride the students took in their own work,” said Eastman. “This is what makes me really proud of our students in HISD.”

Cooking Up Change is a districtwide culinary competition sponsored by Aramark. Aramark’s Executive General Manager Ray Danilowicz said Cooking Up Change is a great way to educate students, parents and the entire community about the National School Lunch Program. The competition gives students a voice at the local and national level on how to improve school meals. “All student-chefs are phenomenal cooks,” said Danilowicz, “and this year was very difficult to send only one team to Washington, D.C.”

Morin said she and Morua competed just for fun, and in the end that is exactly what they did, winning was just a bonus for them. “We are honored to have won and to represent Houston in the finals,” Morin said.

Along with the championship trophy, Morua and Morin were awarded professional chef knife sets and an all-expenses paid trip to Washington, D.C. to compete in the national competition. Last year, HISD’s Westside High School culinary students won the national Cooking Up Change contest.

