



Remember the days of school fun lunches? Depending on where you went to school, you probably had the occasional pizza day, sub day, or even Texas doughnut day. All you had to do was get your parents to sign a form and give you some money to pay the school, and you were on your way to pizza day.

What your elementary school self didn't know is the amount of work that went into organizing those fun lunches. No wonder they only happened once in a blue moon.

Enter Healthy Hunger, an online ordering system connecting elementary and junior high schools with local restaurants for fun lunch days.

Before, school lunch coordinators had to contact local restaurants, determine school lunch menus and pricing, create forms for students to bring home from their parents, and collect money from each student participating in the "fun" lunch. The entire process created a massive workload for school coordinators, and would take countless hours.

Healthy Hunger enables school coordinators to choose from a list of local restaurants, create their desired menu, and send a link for parents to order their children's lunches and pay online. This list goes right to the restaurants, and payment collection is all done within the site.

Healthy Hunger is the brainchild of President and CEO Jordan DeForest, a former fast food franchisee who worked with schools in Calgary and Edmonton to deliver school lunches. DeForest and his family were kept so busy servicing schools in the two cities that they knew there had to be a better way.

"Schools would come in with 500 order forms that we had to go through, sort, and count out how much of each product that we needed to place the order. It was a lot of work," said DeForest. "We started looking at an online system for our restaurants that could help schools order from us a little bit easier." From there Healthy Hunger was born.

In its first year, six Calgary schools used Healthy Hunger for their fun lunches, and that quickly grew to 180 schools in Calgary. Now there are 90,000 registered users on the site from Calgary, Edmonton, Saskatoon, Regina, and several areas in Ontario, with 140,000 students signed up to order.

"My school transitioned from a manual fun lunch system to the Healthy Hunger system and what a difference!" said Nkechi Odina-Seale of Tuscany School in Calgary. "The parents and staff loved the user friendly system as well as the ability to pay online. As the organizer it is nice to not have to manually deal with each child's order and to accept all the money, especially when you are dealing with a school with 700 children."

"What we've found is that when they first sign up with us, schools would usually host the regular number of lunches that they'd always had," said DeForest. "Then after their first few orders, they'd start doing 2, 3, and even 4 times as many lunch dates. It's still much less time than they spent before using paper orders."

Healthy Hunger can also be used for school fundraisers and special events such as movie nights and school dances, as the system can automatically take the payment from parents for the school's event and send the rest of the money raised to the school. Healthy Hunger will send over \$1 million in fundraising cheques to schools this year, and are projecting to send close to \$2 million next year.



The company works with a long list of restaurants which gives schools a wide variety of choices for their fun lunches. When school coordinators log in to the system, they can see a list of vendors available in their area. In addition to the popular sub, smoothie, and pizza restaurants registered with Healthy Hunger, there is also a large variety of non-traditional hot lunch vendors such as Edo Japan, Wok Box, and OPA! of Greece. In the process, Healthy Hunger has also helped the small, franchise-owned restaurants gain a new source of revenue, which is especially valuable in these current economic times.

“It’s really helped a lot of local restaurants generate extra business,” said DeForest. “In the morning time, before lunch, some schools are ordering \$1,000-\$1,500 worth of food which is already a day’s worth of sales to some vendors. That’s an extra day’s worth of sales that restaurants can generate in their non-peak hours.” For the 2016/2017 school year, Healthy Hunger will generate between \$6 and \$7 million in gross sales for its registered restaurants.

With the ease of use that Healthy Hunger provides, schools can now host fun lunches more often than they ever did before.