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### What's A Parent To Do?

#### **The Low Down About Healthy Food Choices for Your Family**

-- Noted Nutrition Author Marion Nestle Speaks in Marin

*San Rafael, CA* – Marin County parents are known for their commitment to their children's health and well being, especially when it comes to food. That commitment was evident on Monday, May 15, when nearly 180 parents, children, school officials and community members turned out to hear noted food expert and university professor Marion Nestle, PhD, MPH.

Speaking at Bacich Community Center in Kentfield, Nestle lauded Marin County schools and School Wellness Councils for their innovative programs promoting healthy school policies, school gardens and nutrition education programs.

*"What's a Parent to Do? The Low Down About Healthy Food Choices for Your Family,"* was organized to celebrate the progress School Wellness Councils are making in each Marin County school district as they develop guidelines to support the health and well-being of children.

Nestle, the Head of Nutrition, Food Studies and Public Health at New York University, is currently a visiting professor at the University of California at Berkeley's School of Public Health. Luckily for the general public, Nestle has moved beyond academia to reach millions of Americans with her easy to digest descriptions of the ways in which the food industry encourages us – and our children – to eat larger and larger quantities of unhealthy food and her simple to understand formula for healthy eating. Her advice in a nutshell: simply put, eat a diet rich in fruits, vegetables and grains, and eat in moderation.

The focus of her presentation at Bacich was her call for reform in the way food is produced and marketed, particularly to children. Responding to a San Rafael parent's question about children's breakfast cereals, Nestle quipped, "It's like serving your kids cookies and candy for breakfast." She added, "I think cartoon characters should be banned from cereal boxes."

Nestle has been called one of the nation's smartest and most influential authorities on nutrition and food policy. In her critically acclaimed book ***Food Politics***, Nestle compares America's food industry to the tobacco industry, accusing food companies of misleading consumers, obstructing regulations that would help people lead healthier lives and marketing unhealthy food such as Coca Cola to schoolchildren. In Nestle's new book, ***What to Eat***, the author takes her critique a step further by giving tips about healthy food choices. Even so, consumers seem to grow more confused by the day about what constitutes a healthy diet, in part because the food marketing system is spending \$36 billion a year to get us to eat more foods with fewer nutrients.

Nestle is realistic when it comes to recommendations about what to eat. When responding to a question Monday about the relative merits about fats such as butter and cheese, Nestle said, “I use butter in moderation because it tastes better... [and] a diet without cheese isn’t worth having.”

During the talk, Nestle gave practical advice on how to make smart choices at the supermarket and deal with some of the marketing ploys aimed at both parents and children. She noted that produce and flowers are placed in the front of markets to entice people into the store, and milk – a staple in most households – is placed at the back of the store, forcing shoppers to wend their way through enticing displays of junk food before they reach the dairy case.