

## Cheshire County HEAL Launches New Hampshire's First Regional Healthy Dining Initiative

Cheshire County HEAL recruited four restaurants to participate in New Hampshire's first county-wide healthy dining initiative, The Turn a New Leaf Program (TANL). The program launched in late 2011 at four Keene area restaurants: Cheshire Medical Center Café, The Community Kitchen, Luca's Mediterranean Café, and Port Authority Café.

Healthy dining initiatives are emerging throughout the country in an effort to reverse the escalating obesity trend. Obesity rates have nearly doubled over the past 40 years and the nation's medical bill costs an estimated \$150 billion a year. Restaurants are an obvious target for addressing this issue because nearly 50 percent of food dollars are spent outside the home and restaurants generally offer menu items higher in calories, sodium, cholesterol, and saturated fat.



The Turn a New Leaf Program addresses both calorie counts and nutritional value by helping consumers identify the healthier options offered at participating local restaurants through menu labeling in the form of an elm leaf and heart. Turn a New Leaf recommendations take into consideration recognized nutrition criteria emphasizing fruits, vegetables, and whole grains, while limiting calories and saturated fats, and eliminating trans fat.

To participate in the program, restaurants turned over some of their recipes for analysis and scrutiny. Maryanne Keating of Cheshire County HEAL explains: "It was easy to recruit the participating restaurants, because they wanted to meet the growing demand by consumers for healthier food options when they eat out while also recognizing the important role they have in Vision 2020's goal of making Cheshire County the healthiest community in the country."



Luca Paris, Chef/Owner at Luca's Mediterranean Café and The Market at Luca's, is already known for promoting healthy food preparation on his television and radio shows, as well as at off-site demonstrations at area businesses. He explained that joining the Turn a New Leaf Program is just good business. "As a small entrepreneur, I do not have the resources the larger chain restaurants have to do a nutritional analysis and market the healthier menu choices that customers are looking for. This program enhances what we do by taking some of our proven recipes and giving it a third-party healthy stamp of approval."

As far as creating a healthier community, Chef Luca says, "If it directs people to healthier choices, and changes the eating habits of one or two people every six months, then we've made a difference."