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### Pass the Peas

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## School Notes

BY KERI SUAREZ

Every mother wants her child to enjoy a well-balanced diet. Yet, for the first six years of her life my daughter, Josie, refused to let any fruit and vegetables besides peeled apples, corn or cooked carrots pass her lips. Instead, she loved breads, cheeses and yogurt. While those foods are undoubtedly better than potato chips and candy, I still longed for her to ask for an apple or eat green beans without putting up a fuss.

I started noticing subtle changes half-way into her first-grade year at Village Seventh-day Adventist Elementary School in Berrien Springs, Michigan. Her teacher, Beth Stevenson, spearheaded a new nutrition program for kids called HOP (Healthy On Purpose). From fruit salad to hummus, every Friday the kids had a chance to

learn about food, taste new things and take part in the food preparation.

I came home one day to find Josie eating apple slices. I momentarily froze out of fear I would startle her and she would realize the peeling was still on the apple. Casually, I asked her if it was a good apple. "Yes, I love apples! Especially the green ones!" she said.

One day, we were at a potluck. I informed Josie she had to get at least one vegetable. After perusing her options, she requested peas. For a moment, I thought she said, "please," but the smile on her face told me what I had been waiting her whole little life to hear. She had learned the value of choosing healthy foods.

Keri Suarez is the Home and School leader at Village Adventist Elementary School. She is the mother of two daughters, Josie and Keira.