



## 2009 VEGETARIAN RESOURCE GROUP SCHOLARSHIP RUNNER-UP ENTRY

Thank you to the St. Louis Vegetarian Society (STLVS) for sponsoring a runner-up prize for our annual vegetarian scholarship, which was awarded to Dakota Young for 2009. The STLVS is very proud of all the students' efforts to support our interests as vegetarians.

**DAKOTA YOUNG** from South Dakota had this to say in her entry:

"I am a Lakota woman, and as a Lakota, I practice our traditional ceremonies. The reason practicing my culture is hard is the fact that we eat so many different animals: snake, badger, and buffalo. The elders of my community accept that I am a vegetarian but still think that I should eat the traditional meal. The greatest success I had was getting the school to allow vegetarian options and using computers for dissection. I was so excited! I am still trying to overcome the challenge of getting the approval of my elders but think that, if I could tell them that being vegetarian would help prevent diabetes in future generations, I could get their approval.

"I have been a vegetarian for over 10 years. I became vegetarian after I was severely food poisoned during the mad cow scare. At first I was traumatized from the effect that had, but during the refrain from eating meat, I did research on what it would be like to be a vegetarian and the many benefits I would get from being vegetarian. I then looked into animal rights and quickly became an activist from what I researched. It was hard to let people hear what I was trying to say since I was only 8, but now I always thank my diet after I get an award or honor. I told people to save the whales after I was named Homecoming Queen. A lot of people know me as a 'hippie' but respect my decision.

"My school cafeteria now provides choices like veggie burgers, veggie lasagna, and PB and J sandwiches. They make a small batch of vegan pancakes and other goods that require eggs and milk and use substitutes. Those who identify themselves as vegetarian/vegan on the lunch cards can bring outside food and drinks (healthy ones!). My friend Arna and I also pushed for snacks during the school day because we are always hungry, and when our school moved to block scheduling, we got the snacks implemented. We now have snacks during our second block class.

"The process to actually have the vegetarian options was arduous. The administration was concerned that we would be costing them money and that some people may object to the substitutions. They thought that students would not be getting nutrients and vitamins and that some allergies may arise in soy and certain fruits. Arna and I stressed that it was an option and that students may choose to have the meals or not. We did several presentations on diabetes and obesity in our Native American communities and how being vegetarian greatly lowered the risks and how much healthier the options would be. We gave an example of the menus and what is contained in each meal. We suggested that students be given a card to show the cooks and the security guards that we are vegetarian and have permission to bring our own lunches if necessary. We proposed the warning to students that, if they want to have a vegetarian meal, they should see if they have allergies or if they are unsure to avoid the option.

"We made several presentations and did a lot of research that the administration considered and eventually pulled through after we got so many signatures and gave a quick run-through of the new rules and options. We showed the warning sign and the card that would be given. We were under strict instructions that only those who are 'legitimate' vegetarians/vegans are offered the card to bring outside food. Arna and I had to give instructions and lectures but we got the newly established options available."

Dakota's friend Arna Two Hawk said, "Dakota made vegan cookies and brownies for student council when they were having a bake sale and encouraged people to drink water. Dakota's family and my family both attend the same church and both practice the Lakota ceremonies. We are Lakota, and when we do sun dances, we are required to eat animals. At wakes and pow-wows, we are often served beef stew and buffalo jerky. Some elders frown upon us for not accepting the meals, while others understand and respect our decisions. It has been really hard, but we each incorporated that vegan beef stew and fruit leather be used instead of real beef and buffalo. Being Lakota and a vegetarian is hard, but we will stand with our beliefs. The good thing about everyone getting along with

Dakota is that they are more open and accepting to the vegetarian lifestyle we have chosen. After being named MVP or All-Tourney, Dakota thanks her vegetarian diet every time. Aside from the animal rights, we have also founded the recycling group and are chairs for Unci Maka week, which is the preservation of Grandmother Earth. Dakota really deserves this scholarship because, being Lakota and being in a state where rodeo is the state sport, she doesn't have a lot of followers in her lifestyle, but does get acceptance. She does have a lot of admirers and fans, and receiving this award will help her in her efforts of bringing greater awareness to vegetarianism and animal rights."

One of Dakota's teachers said, "First off, I want to say Dakota is such a sweetheart. She is adored by faculty and student body alike, which showed when she was recently named Homecoming Queen. Dakota is highly active in community services and is often seen tutoring students from the Rosebud Alternative Program, playing the piano at church, judging for royalty at pow-wows, taking charge for the Homecoming, and going door to door to collect food, blankets, and other necessities for the homeless."

Dakota stated, "I do not eat any type of meat. I do not eat fish, poultry, beef, pork, or other animals that

Lakotas eat. I prefer soymilk and organic foods to the real things, but there are no stores in my area that offer these vegetarian foods... Many vegetarian foods are high-priced because we are from a community where there are not very many vegetarians, if any. I have not had a veggie burger at home in a year or homemade veggie lasagna in about seven months.

Dakota hopes to pursue degrees in chemical engineering, math, and pharmacy.

Graduating and becoming a positive example to her sisters and the younger generation is important to her. After her schooling, Dakota said, "I plan on returning to Rosebud to work at the Indian Health Services. As a pharmacist, I would encourage a diet of vegetarian lifestyle to prevent diabetes."

Ultimately, Dakota hopes to work with Doctors Without Borders. After that, she would like to become a math teacher for an alternative program.

*For information about applying for VRG's two \$5,000 college scholarships for high school seniors who have promoted vegetarianism, visit <[www.vrg.org](http://www.vrg.org)>. Entries for the 2010 competition must be postmarked by Saturday, February 20. To read information about prior winners, see <[www.vrg.org/student/scholar.htm](http://www.vrg.org/student/scholar.htm)>.*

## NOTES FROM THE VRG SCIENTIFIC DEPARTMENT

### THE VEGETARIAN RESOURCE GROUP OUTREACH

VRG Nutrition Advisor Reed Mangels, PhD, RD, was co-author of the latest American Dietetic Association (ADA) position paper on vegetarian diets. In addition, Reed reported that the newest edition of the *Pediatric Nutrition Handbook*, which is published by the American Academy of Pediatrics and sent free to all member pediatricians, contained a chapter on vegetarianism that was positive and used VRG poll information, as well as meal plans that Reed Mangels and Ginny Messina created. The chapter also quoted the American Dietetic Association position paper on vegetarianism.

### VRG IN THE NEWS

VRG Nutrition Advisor Reed Mangels, PhD, RD, was interviewed about the ADA paper mentioned above by Global Television News in Canada, Supreme Master Television, *VIVmag* (a digital magazine covering health, nutrition, style, travel, and other lifestyle topics), and *The Washington Post*. Reed granted interviews to *The York Daily Record/Sunday News* in York County, PA, about how to eat like a vegetarian, to *Vegetarian Times* about common pitfalls, and to *USA Today* about vegetarian bone health. In addition, she was interviewed by *American Baby* magazine about vegetarian babies and children and about the new ADA position paper, by *The Los Angeles Times* about vegetarian children, by *Chesapeake Family* magazine about vegetarian kids growing up in non-vegetarian families, and by *Current Health, A Weekly Reader* magazine about vegetarianism and teenagers. Finally, Reed and longtime VRG volunteer Sarah Ellis, MS, RD, were interviewed about lifelong vegetarians and vegans by *The Boston Globe*.