

# The WESTON FORUM

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## Food fight



Scott Mullin

Amy Kalafa of Weston has produced a documentary film, "Two Angry Moms," about parents who are trying to change the national school lunch program.

### Fed up with school lunches, 'Angry Mom' strikes back

by PATRICIA GAY  
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**F**or several years, the poor quality of food served in school cafeterias was eating away at Amy Kalafa. Having once owned a farm, she raised her family on wholesome, fresh-grown fruit and vegetables. It bothered her to see children being served greasy fries and neon-

colored slushies on a daily basis.

But what could one woman do about it?

Texas Agricultural Secretary Susan Coombs said it would take "two million angry moms" to change the school lunch program. That gave Ms. Kalafa

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## Fed up with school lunches, 'Angry Mom' fights back

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### Angry Mom

For a so-called angry mom, Ms. Kalafa is actually very cheerful these days. Her film has received a great deal of buzz, and PBS has expressed interest in airing it.

A labor of love, the film took three years to make, with a lot of that time spent on the road. To compound the work, Ms. Kalafa was not only the film's producer, but one of its subjects.

Fortunately, Ms. Kalafa was well-suited for the challenge. She and her husband are business partners in A-Ray.TV, a film production company. She has extensive film credits, which include creating and co-producing a series for Court TV called "Inside the Criminal Mind," and producing three seasons of Dr. T. Berry Brazelton's parenting show, "What Every Baby Knows." She also worked as an editor on the TV show "48 Hours."

But it was an interest in health and well-being that inspired Two Angry Moms.

Ms. Kalafa, 49, and her husband, Alex, live on Old Farm Road with their daughters, Sadie, a senior at Hampshire College, and Emma, 14, a student at Weston High School.

The family moved to Weston 16 years ago after running a poultry and game farm in Bovina, N.Y., called Animal Farm. The family ate a great deal of food they grew themselves.

"My daughters are high achievers and I believe a lot of that is due to their healthy diets," Ms. Kalafa said.

After leaving the farm behind to move to Weston, Ms. Kalafa continued providing food for the family by raising chickens and growing a bumper crop of fruits



Scott Mullin

Weston mom Amy Kalafa stands in front of a vending machine at Weston High School filled with junk food.

and vegetables.

"In my garden we have tomatoes, French beans, Swiss chard, carrots, onions, eggplants, peppers, cauliflower, cabbage, broccoli rabe, a lot of herbs, and this year we had our first harvest of peaches, which were fabulous," she said.

### Packaged junk

Because of her interest in good food, Ms. Kalafa became concerned about what her children were eating outside their home. "I noticed the entire culture of food was being dominated by food manufacturers rather than people using instinct and scientific knowledge," she said.

"We are eating packaged junk on a daily basis. Good things are being taken out of food and then chemicals are being put back in," she said.

She believes the poor nutrition-

things like fried foods, and snack chips and soda being offered in vending machines, she said, but schools are also serving food that seems healthy but isn't.

"For example, take Columbo light yogurt. This is a product served in many schools, and something that students will purchase thinking it is a healthy choice. But when you read the label, you find the yogurt contains high fructose corn syrup and aspartame, which is a known neurotoxin. I call this 'tainted yogurt,'" she said.

### School lunch

Parents often ask Ms. Kalafa what they can do about the quality of school lunches. One thing she advises is eating lunch at the school and giving the schools feedback.

In Weston, parents may eat lunch at Hurlbutt Elementary School and Weston Intermediate School by making arrangements in advance. "Parents often eat lunch with children on their birthdays," said Joanna Genovese, Hurlbutt principal.

At the intermediate school, Principal Mark Ribbens said parents are welcome to come for lunch as long as they let the school know in advance so they can make sure there is enough food and space. "I eat the same lunch as the students do every day and I think it's OK," he said.

At the middle school, parents are not allowed to eat lunch at the school because of security issues, according to Andrea Russo, secretary to the principal.

At the high school, a secretary said it is not often that a parent asks to eat lunch with a child, but if arrangements were made, it shouldn't be a problem.

"We ask parents to keep their eyes open, and ask a lot of questions about what's on the menu. Ask to see a list of ingredients for every item in the cafeteria, read labels, and check out what's in the vending machines. Don't be fooled by health claims and 'low calorie' branding. Also, see how much of the food being served is real food and how much of it includes flavorings, artificial sweeteners, preservatives, binders, and unpronounceable ingredients," Ms. Kalafa said.

### Control

Ultimately, the final responsibility of what kind of food children eat at school rests with the parents, Ms. Kalafa said. "The problem is not with the lunch ladies. The parents are the ones who have control — we could ask for better food and get it," she said.

Anyone interested in joining the "Angry Moms" in their quest (Angry Dads are welcome, too) may find out more at [www.angrymoms.org](http://www.angrymoms.org).

an idea.

She joined forces with Susan Rubin, a Westchester County mother and an outspoken critic of school lunches who had been trying for 10 years to improve the quality of food in her school district. The pair became known as the "Two Angry Moms."

An award-winning documentary filmmaker, Ms. Kalafa tackled the subject of school lunches in a new film, titled Two Angry Moms, which follows the duo's crusade over the course of a school year.

The film will have a free screening for the public on Tuesday, Oct. 16, at the Weston Public Library at 7 p.m. and is being hosted by Bob Pritsker, a former chef and restaurateur whom Ms. Kalafa calls an "Angry Dad."

"Bob has twin boys in Weston Middle School, and it is great to have him aboard," Ms. Kalafa said.

The film offers an inside look at what's on the menu in many of the nation's school cafeterias and captures the step-by-step transformation of one dedicated Westchester school district.

Part exposé, part "how to," the film goes beyond why and how schools have been infiltrated by junk food peddlers, to demonstrate workable strategies for replacing "junk" with real, whole food. The film also showcases model schools from Connecticut to California that offer high-quality food programs.

"Basically, it is our quest to get better food in schools," Ms. Kalafa said.