

# She Created the First Sugar-Free School

## Yvonne Sanders-Butler, 49

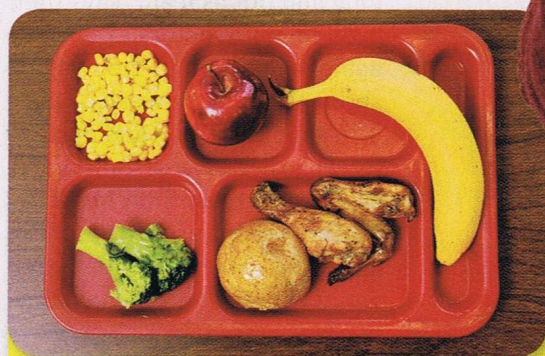
*Elementary School Principal*

Don't dare, as one well-meaning godmother attempted, bring frosted cupcakes to a child's birthday celebration at the Browns Mill Elementary School in Lithonia, Ga. "Our school is sugar-free," says principal Yvonne Sanders-Butler. "No sugar!" And so the cupcakes were sent away, pronto.

It was another victory for Sanders-Butler, who nixed refined sugars and revamped school lunches and physical education classes for her students in 1999. Within a year student disciplinary problems dropped, as did visits to the school nurse, while math and reading scores improved by 15 percent. Can the dietary changes take any credit? "Studies show that when you take sugar out of the diet, you will reap the benefits of a child who is more attentive," says Dr. John Maupin, president of the Morehouse School of Medicine, which is studying what Sanders-Butler calls the nation's first, and only, sugar-free school. Her crusade began in 1996, when high blood pressure sent her to the hospital. "I almost died," says the married mother of one son. "I promised God I would lead a healthier life and educate others." She changed her diet, used weights and the treadmill, and lost 60 lbs. Now, "I'd love to travel the country, revamping nutrition and fitness programs," she says. "There's a need for some extreme makeovers."

Sanders-Butler wrote a book, *Healthy Kids, Smart Kids*, about school nutrition.

By Chandra R. Thomas



**A HEALTHY LUNCH AT BROWNS MILL**  
Chicken is roasted, vegetables are steamed, fruit is fresh and beverages are free of refined sugars at Sanders-Butler's school.

