

Seniors balk at ban on free doughnuts

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By Chuck Burton, AP

Sweets that were being donated to senior centers around Putnam County in New York have been the center of debate after officials acted on their concerns that the county was setting a bad nutritional precedent and banned deliveries.

By Jim Fitzgerald, Associated Press Writer

MAHOPAC, N.Y. — It was just another morning at the senior center: Women seven demonstrators, average age 76, were picketing outside, demanding c

They wore sandwich boards proclaiming, "Give Us Our Just Desserts" and "

At issue is a decision to refuse free doughnuts, pies and breads that were b County, north of New York City. Officials were concerned that the county wa mounds of doughnuts and other sweets to seniors.

The picketers said they were objecting not to a lack of sweets but that they v

"Lack of respect is what it's all about," said Joe Hajkowski, 75, a former labo He said officials had implied that seniors were gorging themselves on jelly d for themselves.

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C. Michael Sibilia said, "I'm 86, not 8."

Inside, some seniors said they missed the doughnuts but others said they were glad to see them go.

"It was disgusting the way people went after them," said 80-year-old Rita Jorgensen. "I think the senior center did them a favor

Stan Tuttle, coordinator of nutritional services for the county's Office for the Aging, said the program had gotten out of control. . pastries were delivered, by various means, to the William Koehler Memorial Senior Center each day. Some were moldy and sc volunteers' cars, he said.

Caregivers there and elsewhere say the doughnut debate illustrates the difficulty of balancing nutrition and choice when provid

"Senior citizens can walk down to the store and buy doughnuts. Nobody's stopping them," said Michael Jacobson, executive di Interest in Washington.

But he notes that older people have high rates of heart disease and high blood pressure and says senior citizen centers, nursir worsening the health problems of seniors.

At the North East Bronx Senior Citizen Center, lunch is served five times a week (suggested contribution \$1.50).

"We don't tell them what to do, we don't force them to eat what's good for them. But we certainly don't give them anything that's

The church-basement senior center, one of 325 under the New York City Department for the Aging, has a mostly Italian-Ameri includes eggplant parmigiana, linguini with clams and manicotti.

"We try to give them what they like," said the cook, Stella Bruno.

The lunches have to supply one-third of the federal minimum daily requirements in such categories as calories, protein, vitamir the department.

The Bronx center offers coffee, tea, bagels and rolls in the morning, but nothing in the doughnut family.

"The sweetest thing here is the raisin in the raisin bagel," said Nicholas Volpicella, 87.

Maureen Janowski, director of nutrition resources for Morrison Senior Dining in Atlanta, which provides meals at more than 370 locations, said preferences depend somewhat on their age. Those born between 1901 and 1925 generally prefer meat and potatoes, and those born after 1925 are more trendy, a little more adventurous, a lot more nutrition-savvy," she said.

"They have choices, and we show them how to make good choices," she said.

At the Bronx center, Bruno said she tries to help the seniors avoid the bad buffet choices when they take a trip to Atlantic City. She said she serves lunches — with a roast beef sandwich, cranberry juice and carrot sticks.

"Protein, vitamin C, vitamin A," she said.

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