

Nurture makes health education fun and affordable

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The phrase eating healthy often conjures up images of elite grocery stores such as Whole Foods or pricey seasonal farmer's markets. But Kathryn Guylay of Winnetka, founder and director of the new nonprofit, Nurture, aims to make eating healthy easy and cost-effective for everyone, regardless of income.

"There are definitely ways to cook healthy and delicious food with limited resources," Guylay said.

Nurture is an organization that does "nutrition and health education disguised as cooking class," Guylay said. She came up with the idea in 2006 when her child was in preschool.

"I kept hearing or reading about terrible statistics about our nation's health," Guylay said. "For example, one out of three kids born after 2000 will develop diabetes. My older child was born that year, so I started thinking about their generation. It got me scared, but also motivated to do something about it."

Around the same time, Guylay was at a crossroads professionally.

"I had a master's in business, but I wanted to pursue my passion for food and eating healthy," Guylay said. "I thought to myself, 'How can I apply my project management skills with meeting a need in society?'"

That's when Guylay recruited board members for Nurture—a registered nurse, someone who had a Ph.D. in nutrition and a specialist in children's nutrition education among others. Together, they created the Nurture programs, which work with families to teach them how to cook healthfully with rice cookers and slow cookers. They also emphasize fitness and physical activity.

The programs officially kicked off earlier this year at the St. Phillip Lutheran Church in Glenview and are co-sponsored by either the Northfield Township Food Pantry or Family Focus in Evanston. In order to qualify for the classes, a family needs to qualify for free hot lunches at school.

The classes teach recipes from five food groups: whole grains (including brown rice, quinoa, bulgar and oatmeal); split peas and lentils; beans; fruits; and vegetables. They are provided with a rice cooker and slow cooker free of charge, which, according to Guylay, can be used to cook items from the first three food groups.

"These are low-cost foods that people can



From left, volunteers Shayna Oshita, Elizabeth Thomas, Kathryn Guylay, Stacey Patillo and Heather Sullivan, a registered dietician, teach a class to teen moms.



Volunteer Jeff Guylay, right, admires a healthy breakfast prepared by a Nurture Kids program participant.

Photos submitted by Kathryn Guylay

make with very little time," Guylay said. "You can take 5 minutes in the morning, turn on the slow cooker, and come back with your house smelling great and your food ready to eat."

The programs also focus on the importance of fruits and vegetables, as those are usually the first things lower-income families cut out, not only because of price but also because they have fewer calories compared to carbohydrates.

"Fruits and vegetables are not necessarily out of the price range," Guylay said. "We'll talk about the produce that's in season. This fall, we're cooking with acorn squash and butternut squash."

These cooking classes are combined with free sessions with a personal trainer, who suggests exercises that can be practiced without

equipment.

"No fitness club fees are required," Guylay said. "We'll tell families to use cans instead of weights. We teach mothers exercises that involve their baby."

Guylay said Nurture has made an impact in families' lives while still being fun for children and teens.

"People will say things like, 'This program changed my life,'" said Guylay. "They'll say they have more energy. But a kid will just be excited to tell his friends, 'I'm going to my cooking class tonight.'"

Guylay said the programs are more than cooking classes—they are also a form of community building, a way to reinforce the important role food plays in peoples' family lives.

BUTTERNUT SQUASH SOUP

Ingredients:

1 butternut squash, peeled and chopped (\$1)
 1-pound bag of carrots, peeled and chopped (\$0.99)
 1 bunch celery, washed and chopped (\$1.99)
 Seasoning: cumin, cinnamon, olive oil (\$0.75*)
 Liquid: 1 32-ounce can of chicken broth (\$1.99**)

Total cost: \$6.72, Cost per serving: \$.67

*Condiments and spices are calculated at a \$0.25 cost estimate for each use.

**Whole Foods 365 brand; does not contain MSG/autolyzed yeast extract.

Directions: Sauté carrots and celery in olive oil in a large pot for several minutes. Add squash and broth and cook on medium heat for about one hour or until squash is soft. Cool before whipping with hand blender to desired consistency.

Toppings: Try soup with a spoonful of sour cream, plain yogurt, crème fraîche or a swirl of heavy cream. For a crunch, top with a little melted cheese toasts—a way to use up a loaf of bread and the odds-and-ends cheese in the fridge. Croutons also work well as does parsley.

Yields 10 servings

—Recipe from Kathryn Guylay

"It brings the family together for a sit-down meal," Guylay said. "It reminds them that family often revolves around meals."

Guylay has big plans for Nurture for the upcoming year. Her two main goals are having classes in Spanish and bringing Nurture to schools.

"We are trying to find schools that have gardens, who already have an emphasis on growing fresh foods," Guylay said. "We want children and adults to realize that when you cook healthy, you feel good, and when you feel good, you have more energy. When you have more energy, you exercise more. It's this whole big circle."

For more information about Nurture, go to www.nurtureyourfamily.org.