



Nonprofit teaches healthy eating, one rice cooker at a time

By [Liz Hoffman](#)

Tuesday, March 09, 2010

Of all the statistics on childhood obesity, perhaps none is more striking than this: If current trends continue, 1 in 3 children born in the year 2000 will develop diabetes during their lifetime.

For Kathryn Guylay, who welcomed daughter Elena in 2000, that number hit hard.

"That's my daughter, her friends, her classmates," Guylay says. "That struck very, very close to home."

So the Winnetka mom took her passion for nutrition and background in marketing and management and got cooking -- literally. Guylay founded [Nurture](#), a growing nonprofit that helps low-income families in the northern suburbs shop, cook and eat healthier. She recruited a board full of like-minded women, including a personal trainer, dietician and registered nurse and the program now reaches hundreds of area families through food pantries and school programs.

Too often, Guylay says, she hears that eating healthy is too expensive, too complicated or takes too long. So the program takes each of those barriers head-on, with recipes that rely heavily on slow-cookers, stress whole grains and fresh produce, and come in under \$1.50 per serving.

"Flip the switch, go to work and come home to a healthy meal for less than you'll pay at a drive-thru," Guylay says.

All the recipes taught in Nurture's classes and posted on its [Web site](#) include a per-serving cost.

The program received a grant for \$1,000 in February for its rice cooker programs, which gives rice cookers to expectant mothers, and teaches them how to cook whole grains, a major part of its nutrition program.

Nurture finds most of its clients through north suburban food pantries. The Northfield Township Food Pantry, the biggest food assistance program in the northern suburbs, serves more than 500 families in need. The program has also developed a kids' curriculum that is being taught in elementary schools in Highwood, Des Plaines and Evanston, with plans to expand to more districts next year.

TIPS FOR HEALTHY EATING

Nurture's staff shared their tips for getting your kids to eat the good stuff. Need tips on how to prepare it? Go to nurtureyourfamily.org and click on Recipes.

1. Don't give up.

It takes about a dozen times for kids to try a new food before they like it, Nurture's dietician Juliette Britton says. Start with non-tasting exposure: Have your kids touch, smell and learn about a new food. "Then when they see it on their plate, they'll recognize it and they'll feel more comfortable," Britton says.

Learning to eat healthy on a budget -- always an important lesson -- is more valuable in light of the recession, Guylay says. Enrollment at area food pantries is up 30 percent this year over last.

Nurture's classes are free for families whose kids qualify for free or reduced-price lunch.

But there are tips in the group's classes that will come in handy long after the recession eases. Among Guylay's favorites? [Steel-cut oats](#), which have about twice the fiber of rolled oats and cost about 67 cents per serving.

"We're not food cops," says Juliette Britton, Nurture's staff dietician and coordinator of its programs for kids. "We're just here to make people a little bit more aware of how they can make just a few better choices throughout the day."

For more information, class schedules and more than 30 original recipes, visit nurtureyourfamily.org.

2. Food passport.

Your kids may be a little young for international travel, but try a food passport. They can get stickers for trying new and interesting foods. And the incentive to fill up their books will have them jumping at the chance for more stamps.

3. Everything in moderation.

It's a truism, but it's also true. Don't be food cops, Britton says, and don't engage in "food power struggles." Instead, allow your kids to have dessert, but make sure they know it's special.

4. Frame the conversation.

Nurture uses "go foods" and "slow foods," playing on kids' natural preference for, well, going. All the time.

© Chicago Parent 2009. All rights reserved.

<http://www.chicagoparent.com/magazines/web-only/april-2010/nonprofit-teaches-healthy-eating,-one-rice-cooker-at-a-time>